Commentary

Volume Seventy-three, Number Six, June 1982

Kissinger Reconsidered

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BOOKS:

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MOVIES:

BLACK COMEDY

Richard Grenier

FICTION:

WHY JOHN IRVING IS SO POPULAR

Joseph Epstein

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Commentary

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Editor: Norman Podhoretz
Executive Editor: Neal Kozodoy
Managing Editor: Marion Magid
Associate Editor: Brenda Brown
Contributing Editors: Robert Alter, Milton Himmelfarb, Walter Laqueur
Comptroller: Philip Shamis
Production Manager: Bruce Lodi
Circulation Manager: Helene Hansen
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Letters from Readers

Voting Rights

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Walter Berns's superb dissection of the maladies being created by Congress in rewriting the Voting Rights Act ["Voting Rights and Wrongs," March] reveals the fallacy in speaking of a "renewal" of that law. In demonstrating how the revision of Section 2 in effect creates a new law, he uncovers the fact that the issues that have captured most public discussion, namely, the process of pre-clearance and the question of relief from pre-clearance, or "bail-out" (as though the ship of state were sinking), prove to be misrepresentations of the problem of voting rights. The Voting Rights Act is a radical document, though its supporters speak only of continuity and of preservation of past gains.

To many of those supporters . . . Mr. Berns's discontent with the development of a system of proportional representation is not warranted. "Justice," in their eyes, requires the extension of the Act, even if it means that all fifty states and their numerous subdivisions would be "covered," and thus subject to preclearance. After all, proportional representation is a legitimate system in other countries; besides, it is more democratic. In their view, neither that system nor a meddlesome judiciary should be considered costs, but actual gains. . . .

In light of this response it may be possible to strengthen Mr. Berns's case against the new Voting Rights Act by considering, once again, why voting should be a right and by showing how, with the aid of the judiciary, that Act attacks the very idea of free elections.

Guaranteed to all competent citizens (that is, *not* to minors or to the criminally insane), the vote, or a casting of a ballot, indicates an acceptance of the system of representative government that makes laws and provides choices upon which citizens are asked to decide. Voting, in other words, is an act of consent. Citizens are also provided with a place in which to register that consent without encountering interference from anyone else. This privacy is protected by the government even more securely than is the privacy of the citizen's home. The act of consent, to be valid, must be the expression of a free citizen, the act of an *uncoerced* individual.

But choices made in the voting booth are also partisan choices. Being partisan means being partial to certain kinds of information and certain values and not to others. Such choices are made for one side or another, one party or another, one candidate or another, and they are made on the basis of opinions about which option is best. This implies the right to make illogical choices, even errors. Free partisan choices also mean that government cannot establish authoritative rules for how a citizen must make a choice. Being made in the privacy of the voting booth, the choice and the reasons for it should be immune from an inquiring government. Free choice implies not having to reveal or to justify that choice to anyone (including exit pollsters).

This understanding of voting has somehow gotten lost. . . . When in 1969 Chief Justice Warren concluded that "all activities necessary to make a vote effective" must be protected by the Voting Rights Act, consideration for minority-voting strength began taking precedence over partisan concerns. That shift is exposed in the claim that racial-bloc voting among whites is responsible for the absence of minority representation or insufficient minority representation. Legislators represent partisans, but partisans are not understood to be people affiliated with a political party, but rather members of racial groups. Partisanship is now interpreted as racism and racial-bloc voting is assumed to be racist-bloc voting. So too is the sum of votes cast in an election judged by *who* the voters are rather than by the votes themselves. It follows that the citizen, the individual voter, is no longer a person registering consent and partisan opinion, but is a white or black voter registering only a racial opinion.

The new Voting Rights Act, using outcomes of elections as measures of the constitutionality of any electoral system, sets in motion a silent revolution. It rests on the new principle that it is not individuals who consent to government but groups. Furthermore, the new law, in equating imperfect and inexact reasoning with prejudice, already prejudges voters' choices and reasons. In effect, this denies that voting has anything to do with consent, but only with acts of partisanship. Instead of registering consent for a system of government, elections be-

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come preludes, if not outright challenges, to the system.

It is true, of course, that consent is not determined solely by voting. Non-voting is a form of tacit consent. But this form of consent is not recognized as legitimate by the authors and defenders of the 1982 Act. They prefer to believe that if eligible minority voters do not register or vote, Bull Connor must be standing in the Board of Elections doorway (or voting booth) with a cattle prod to stop them. Since whites are now responsible for minority electoral failures, government is called upon to correct the problem, according to an odd kind of political logic, which argues: all votes are to be counted equally, since the Court holds to the doctrine of "one man, one vote"; [but] bloc votes by a majority of voters lead to unproportional outcomes; thus, votes are not to be counted equally.

One implication of such political logic is that the individual . . . voter need not be the object of government protection since his vote and his reasons for voting are already prejudged. Nor does government need to be neutral . . .; in the name of justice and fairness it can provide a corrective to the inexact reasoning of the citizen by holding to the standard of group proportionality. But to prejudge an outcome as imperfect is already to have a perfect solution in mind prior to the voting. This means that certain rules dictating what kinds of people are to be elected are in effect. Elections, in a sense, are fixed before they start. . . .

The decision by Congress to rewrite the Voting Rights Act in such a way that "effective voting strength" is the basis of the right to vote further reinforces the belief that there can be no national or public interest because government cannot and should not be neutral about race. . . . Not only is neutrality denied, so is the distinction between political interests and prejudices. Ignoring the need to demonstrate "intent to discriminate" on the grounds that in some cases it is difficult to prove, Congress and the Courts are . . . contributing to further confusion of partisanship with racism.

The fact that voters may be faced with the possibility of having their votes held up to them as racist by the government each time they vote in elections in which minority candidates are seeking office means that the major effect of the 1982 Act is to provide a subtle abridgment of the right of all citizens to a secret ballot. This could, in the future, diminish voter interest in voting even more. Denying that there are other partisan interests beyond race also could depress further the consensus-building effects of political parties. If left to reach its logical conclusion, it could encourage even more radical racial politics and open the door to appeals by fringe groups that, to date, have been beyond the pale of nearly all reasonable voters, including those who are most inexact and imperfect.

MARTIN J. PLAX
Cleveland, Ohio

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In "Voting Rights and Wrongs" Walter Berns argues that the bill to extend the Voting Rights Act, which was passed by the House of Representatives overwhelmingly (and a compromise version of which has been endorsed by President Reagan as well as by the Senate Judiciary Committee by a vote of 17-1), ought to be defeated unless it is amended. The language that Mr. Berns objects to most strenuously is in the amended Section 2 of the bill which provides, in pertinent part:

> No voting qualification or prerequisite to voting or standard practice or procedure shall be imposed or applied by any state or political subdivision in a manner which results in a denial or abridgment of the right of any citizen of the United States to vote on account of race or color. . . . The fact that members of a minority group have not been elected in numbers equal to the group's proportion of the population shall not, in and of itself, constitute a violation of this section.

Mr. Berns maintains that this language which, in essence, substitutes for the present requirement of proving discriminatory "intent" a new requirement merely of discriminatory "results" or "effects," would mean in actuality that insistence on racial proportionality among elected officials would become the order of the day. Or, at least, that is how the courts would be likely to construe it, according to Mr. Berns, notwithstanding its actual wording.

The first thing to be said about the article is that it is a solid and challenging contribution to the debate. It is also a piece of advocacy, and there is more to be said on the other side than Mr. Berns offers us. Consider, for example, the following section from the report on Voting Rights Act Extension of the House Committee on the Judiciary (which Mr. Berns does allude to):

> Under the Voting Rights Act, whether a discriminatory practice or procedure is of recent origin affects only the mechanism that triggers relief, i.e., litigation or pre-clearance. The lawfulness of such a practice should not vary depending upon when it was adopted, i.e., whether it is a change. Yet, while some discriminatory practices and procedures have been successfully challenged under Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act, the Supreme Court's interpretation of Section 2 in *City of Mobile* v. *Bolden* has created confusion as to the proof necessary to establish a violation under that section.
>
> Prior to *Bolden*, a violation of Section 2 could be established by direct or indirect evidence concerning the context, nature, and result of the practice at issue. In *Bolden*, Justice Stewart, writing for the plurality, construed Section 2 of the Act as merely restating the prohibitions of the Fifteenth Amendment. The Court held that a challenged practice would not be unlawful under that section unless motivated by discriminatory intent. The Committee does not agree with this construction of Section 2 and believes that the intent of the section should be clarified.
>
> Section 2 of the H.R. 3112 will amend Section 2 of the Act to make clear that proof of discriminatory purpose or intent is not required in cases brought under that provision. Many of these discriminatory laws have been in effect since the turn of the century. Efforts to find a "smoking gun" to establish racial discriminatory purpose or intent are not only futile, but irrelevant to the consideration of whether discrimination has resulted from such election practice.
>
> The purpose of the amendment to Section 2 is to restate Congress' earlier intent that violations of the Voting Rights Act, including Section 2, could be established by showing the discriminatory effect of the challenged practice. . . .
>
> By amending Section 2 of the Act, Congress intends to restore the pre-*Bolden* understanding of the proper legal standard which focuses on the result and consequences of an allegedly discriminatory voting or electoral practice rather than the intent or motivation behind it.

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If the revised law (even with the new "compromise" language) were to be enacted, it is not inconceivable that the scenario envisioned by Mr. Berns could come to pass. The Supreme Court certainly has rendered decisions, such as *UJO* v. *Carey* and *Weber* v. *United Steelworkers*, cited by Mr. Berns, which (in the opinion of a good many legal scholars) establish bad, pro-proportionality law. It is also true, however, that the Court has been quite fickle —some of its rulings in civil-rights cases are hard to reconcile—and predicting how it may rule on a particular statute is a precarious business, especially when the composition of the Court a few years hence may be quite different.

There have been other Supreme Court decisions which would lead one to hope that the Court would not in the future establish racial proportionality in election results as the proper standard. In a legislative reapportionment case in Indiana in 1971, for example, *Whitcomb* v. *Chavis*, the Court held that evidence that a black ghetto area had fewer legislators than its proportion of the county population would warrant, did not prove that there was invidious discrimination against black ghetto residents. And, in the Texas reapportionment case of *White* v. *Regester* in 1973, the Court ruled that it is not enough to show that the racial groups allegedly discriminated against (blacks and Mexican Americans) did not have legislative seats in proportion to their voting potential. The Court said that minority voters would have to present evidence such as a past history of discrimination, unfair election rules, or a pattern of racial-bloc voting to prove that the challenged system denied them an equal opportunity "to participate in the political processes."

In sum, Mr. Berns has presented a cogent critique of the language of the amended Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act. But then, what *should* Congress do in response to situations such as that in Mobile, Alabama, where, as Mr. Berns acknowledges, blacks comprise more than 35 percent of the population but no black has ever been elected a city commissioner? That he does not tell us. Perhaps he feels that the black citizens of Mobile, who brought the *Bolden* case, are not truly aggrieved by the at-large election system and that nothing need be done. But that, of course, is a position that would be quite difficult to "sell" to the black petitioners from Mobile, or to other black people elsewhere, in the light of their long and bitter history of exclusion from the political process in the South.

SAMUEL RABINOVE
Director, Discrimination Division
Domestic Affairs Department
American Jewish Committee
New York City

WALTER BERNS writes:

I am grateful to Martin J. Plax for his unusually thoughtful letter. Unfortunately, his understanding of voting and elections is shared neither by our legislators nor our judges, which goes a long way toward explaining the present condition of our law on this subject. In the recent cases of *Rybicki, Del Valle*, and *Crosby* v. *State Board of Elections* (U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division, docket numbers 81C 6030, 6052, 6053), so recent, in fact, that they are not yet reported, the court was faced with the task (impossible, ultimately, of successful accomplishment) of achieving a measure of racial proportionality of representation in a system of single-member districts. At issue was the Illinois General Assembly redistricting plan which was being challenged by suburban Republicans (Rybicki), urban Hispanics (Del Valle), and mostly-urban blacks (Crosby), each group alleging a "dilution" of its voting strength. The court rejected Rybicki's claim, approved a settlement agreement reached by Del Valle and the Redistricting Commission, and, by relying now on one principle, now on another (separate but equal, separate but unequal, separate but better off, each of them presumably derived from the Fourteenth Amendment), upheld some of Crosby's claims and rejected others. Achieving racial proportionality while maintaining the equality, compactness, and contiguity of districts is no easy matter. Thus, just as the trial court in the Mobile case ordered that city to replace its commission form of government with a mayor-council system, it would surprise no one familiar with modern judicial practice if the Court of Appeals of the Seventh Circuit were, when it hears the Crosby case, to order Illinois to abandon its present districting system and put in its place a straightforward system of racial proportional representation. How better to honor the new principle of racially-based entitlements? Of course, a districting system might be retained if it were to be made into a multilayered districting system, wherein black and Hispanic districts would each be superimposed over white districts and the people of Illinois would vote not as citizens but as blacks, Hispanics, and whites (or "none-of-the-above").

Would this satisfy Samuel Rabinove? He taxes me (albeit gently) for failing to suggest how Congress might remedy the Mobile situation where blacks, although they comprise some 35 percent of the population, have never succeeded in electing a black commissioner. Since I cannot accept the principle of racially-based entitlements—the principle embodied in the amended Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act and implicit in Mr. Rabinove's criticism of me—there is little I can properly suggest. In my view, Mobile blacks are not, as such, entitled to representation; nor are Mobile whites, Cook County, Illinois, Republicans, or Orange County, California, Democrats. All I can suggest is that Mobile blacks go to the polls in the same proportion as Mobile whites. When they do, they will almost surely find themselves in that familiar and happy democratic situation where their opinions are consulted and weighed, their votes solicited by candidates of all races and parties, and their electoral support duly rewarded. In short, they will be represented.

One final word to Samuel Rabinove and anyone else who, believing strongly in the right to vote, cannot bring himself to oppose the amended Section 2. The majority of Southern Senators and Representatives, at this writing, have registered their support of the bill as amended. Why? It is not, I think, cynical to suggest that they find it easy to support it because they know that it will have virtually no effect in the South, the region where, traditionally, the right to vote has been denied to blacks. With or without the amended Section 2, their states will continue to be subject to the preclearance provision, according to which all changes in voting and electoral laws must be approved by the Justice Department. In due course—when, for whatever reason, the city wants to change its voting laws and procedures—this will bring even Mobile under the Voting Rights Act. The effect of the new Section 2 will be felt primarily outside the South, and in the South only insofar as its politicians take pleasure in playing goose and gander.

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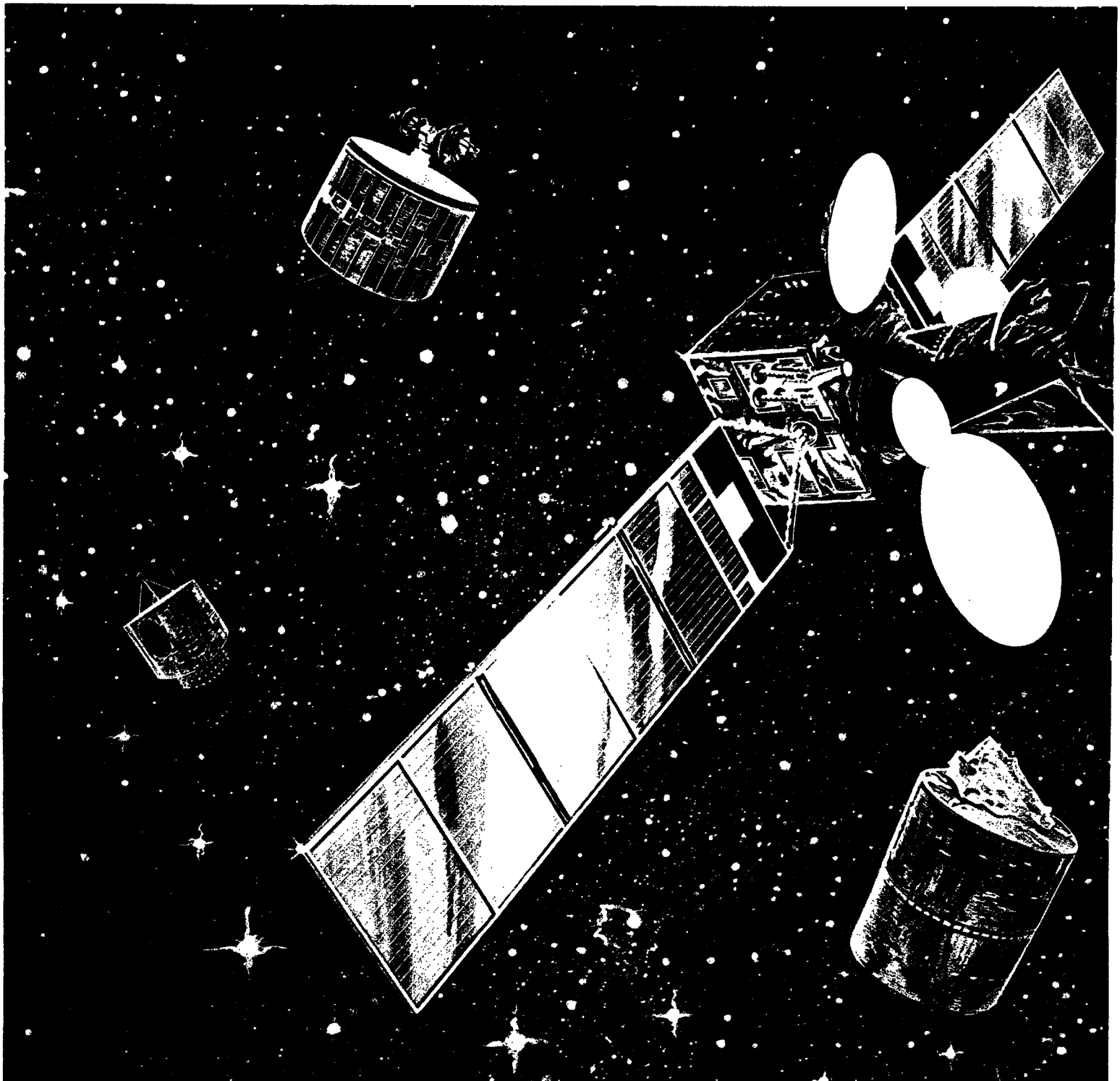

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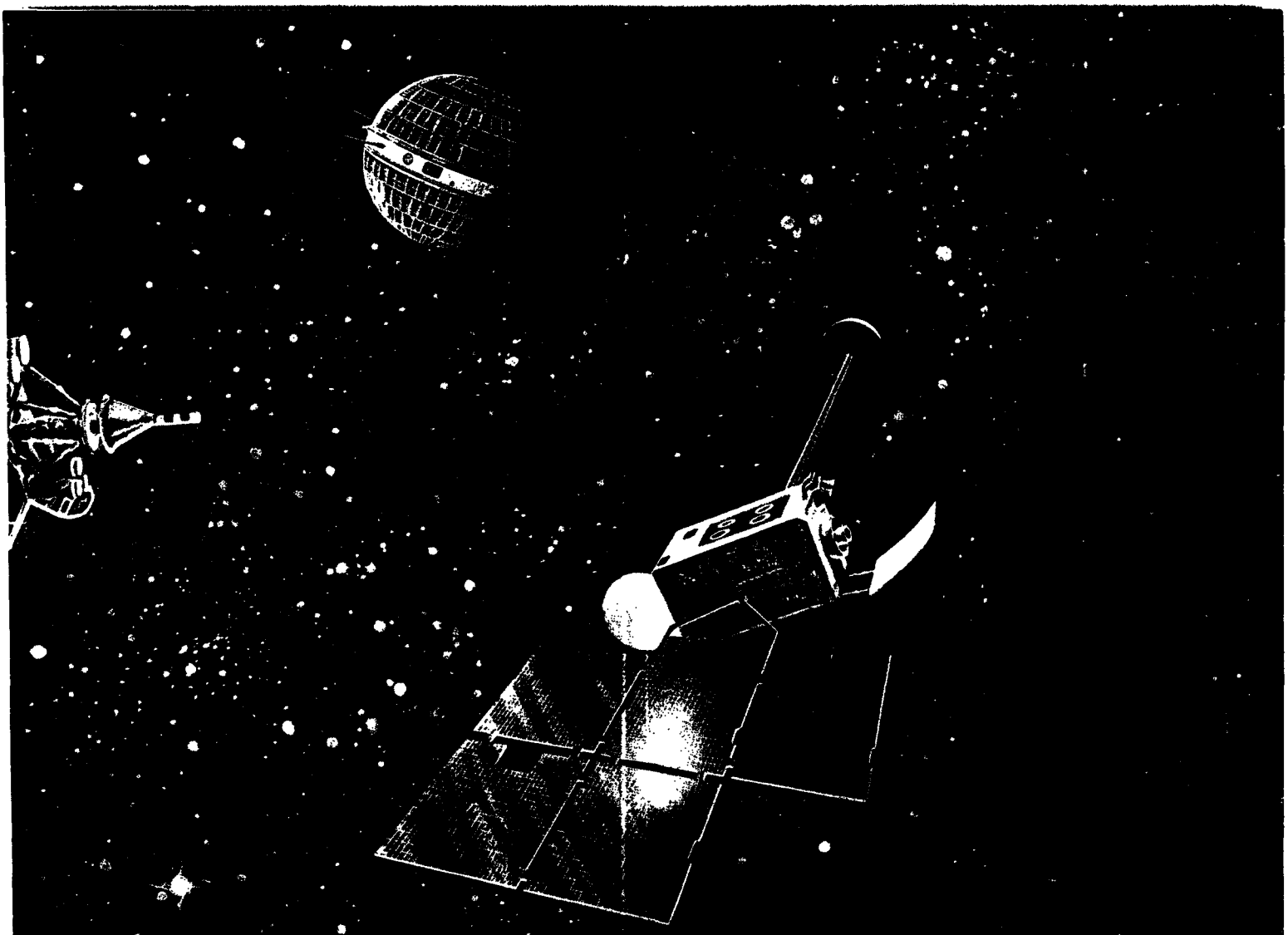

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Reform Judaism

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

For a variety of reasons it has become fashionable in recent years to disparage classical Reform Judaism. I readily admit that I have contributed my own share in criticizing certain aspects of that 19th-century (and early 20th-century) phenomenon, although I do not believe that classical reform Judaism was quite so bad as it is now often made out to have been. But I regard it as a pity that Robert Alter, in his otherwise very perceptive article on the Torah commentary of Rabbi W. Gunther Plaut ["Reform Judaism and the Bible," February], sees fit to make that Torah commentary a peg on which to hang his condemnation of the classical Reform position. What Mr. Alter is telling us is that classical Reform related to the Bible in such a way that "the formative past could be held at arm's length," something which the Plaut commentary is said not to do.

Nothing that I am going to say is meant to be construed as a negative comment on the work which Rabbi Plaut has accomplished. In some areas of religious belief and practice, I probably see eye to eye with Rabbi Plaut, and I regard the commentary he has produced as a remarkable achievement. But how typical is Rabbi Plaut of today's Reform Judaism? And how much closer are the Reform Jewish readers of his commentary to the Bible than were the rabbis and congregants of the "classical" phase of Reform Judaism, who, according to Mr. Alter, were kept at arm's length from that document of Judaism's formative past?

If there is one assertion about which the Bible does not waver, it is that there is a God. I submit that, at the time of classical Reform Judaism, there were fewer Reform rabbis who espoused atheism, nontheistic humanism, and agnosticism than there are today. And I mean "fewer" in the sense of percentages, since, obviously, there were then considerably fewer Reform rabbis than there are today.

There is much to criticize in the educational efforts of the classical Reformers, particularly insofar as the transmission of knowledge about *post*-biblical Judaism is concerned. But I submit that the Bible itself occupied a more significant place in the Reform Jewish educational curriculum in the classical period than it does today. Whole *books* of the Bible were actually studied in Reform religious schools, albeit in English translation, and not little snippets of verses, culled from all over the place, to furnish illustrations for such Sunday School projects as "Judaism and Social Action," "Sex in the Bible," and "The Jewish Woman through the Ages," as is the educational practice today.... As late as the 1950's, Reform rabbinical students were still *required* to take *eight* Bible courses at the Hebrew Union College, a requirement going back to the classical past. Today only *three* such courses are required.

Reform Jewish worship services today may have acquired a greater emotional "warmth" than they had in classical Reform Judaism, and I heartily welcome that. But neither the wearing of skullcaps nor the increased use of Hebrew as the language of prayer is particularly biblical.

And what is so "biblical" about the emphasis on Jewish peoplehood or even nationhood, which Mr. Alter so much admires? I submit that this emphasis owes more to European anti-Semitism (with Jews all too eager to make their detractors' concepts and vocabulary their own) than to a preoccupation with biblical realities. The classical Reformers never denied that, in biblical days, the Jews had been a people. (Obviously, 19th-century definitions of "nationhood" would be anachronistic when dealing with biblical Israel.) But the classical Reformers also insisted upon the fact of *development*, as do their successors today.

The fact that the Jews constituted a polity in the biblical period does not have to mean that they still constituted such a polity in the 19th or the 20th centuries—or, for that matter, even in the 12th or the 16th. That is why, in Mr. Alter's phrase, the classical Reformers were able, in fact were obliged, to hold the formative past at arm's length. Like it or not, 19th-century and 20th-century American Reform Jews are *not* a nation, but Americans of the Jewish faith. No amount of mouthing of Zionist slogans and accepting of Zionist platforms by today's Reform Jewish establishment can gloss over the fact that American Reform Jews are not exactly breaking down the doors at Israel *aliyah* offices in an attempt to partake of Jewish national existence.

It is, therefore, only the slogans which have changed, not the reality. But something else has changed, too. While, as Mr. Alter complains, the classical Reformers may have attempted to separate the wheat from the chaff, the wheat which they did retain was taken very seriously by them—more seriously, I submit, than the "unwinnowed" Bible is by their latter-day successors. Rabbi David Einhorn, for example, the classical Reformer in America *par excellence*, did not simply reject the sacrificial cult, which occupies such a prominent place in Torah legislation, as a primitive stage of worship, the way in which that cult is cavalierly dismissed by Reform Jews today. In his book, *Das Prinzip des Mosaismus*, published in 1854, he tried to determine what religious principles were implied by, and inherent in, the biblical sacrificial cult; and, not desiring the messianic restoration of that particular cult, he sought more acceptable ways in which those biblical principles could be expressed by Reform Jews. When, in 1857-58, he published his prayerbook, *'Olath Tamid* ("The Regular Burnt Offering"), he unashamedly quoted Numbers 28:26 on the title page, in both Hebrew and German: "The regular burnt offering, instituted at Mount Sinai—an offering by fire of pleasing odor to the Lord."

Rabbi Einhorn conducted worship services *to serve the Lord*, and to fulfill an *obligation* which was as incumbent upon Reform Jews as the burnt offerings were upon their biblical ancestors—a truly *biblical* motivation which can hardly be said to be much in evidence in today's Reform Jewish worship. What is more, the many new prayers which Rabbi Einhorn himself composed used biblical imagery and biblical cadences—quite unlike the marketplace English prose, uninspired and uninspiring, of the liturgical productions of latter-day Reform Judaism. I submit that, if Rabbi Einhorn can be described as keeping the people at arm's length from the formative biblical past, then what is going on in Reform temples today must be described as involving a distance of the length of *several* arms.

Rabbi Plaut is certainly not responsible for this state of affairs. On the contrary, his new Torah commentary might even be effective in restoring some religious commitment to the hearts and minds of today's Reform Jews. Mr. Alter

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should have left it at that. For that commentary, notwithstanding the fact of its publication by the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, can in no way establish the fact that classical Reform Judaism kept the Bible at arm's length. Nor does it in any way prove that today's Reform Jews, apart from Rabbi Plaut himself and a few others, are at all closer than the classical Reformers were to the spirit, the message, and the commanding words of the Torah.

JAKOB J. PETUCHOWSKI
Hebrew Union College-Jewish
Institute of Religion
Cincinnati, Ohio

ROBERT ALTER writes:

Jakob J. Petuchowski's quarrel is obviously with his contemporary Reform colleagues and not with me, and I assume there are forums where they might want to answer his charges. One may hope that the current situation is not quite so dismal as he claims, and that the Plaut commentary is not the isolated expression of an individual which it seems to him. At the very least, Mr. Petuchowski will surely agree with me that the publication of such a text under the aegis of Reform Judaism would have been inconceivable fifty or a hundred years ago.

With regard to the historcial issues he raises, I should like to make just one observation. The assertion that the biblical emphasis on peoplehood was read into Scripture because of 19th-century anti-Semitism is patently false. An absolutely central and explicit notion of peoplehood pervades the Bible. Israel, in the words of Balaam's blessing, is "a people that dwells alone"—not a religious confession. The Israelite faith, to be sure, underwent radical changes after the Bible, but without ever compromising the fundamental assumption that Israel was a people attached to a land (even in exile) and united by law. It was only with classical Reform that this assumption was discarded, and whatever the religious sincerity of the Reformers, that rejection of peoplehood was an estrangement from the Bible as Jews had always understood it.

Solidarity

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Walter Laqueur's article, "What Poland Means" [March], correctly describes the ability of modern totalitarian regimes to crush democratic movements. Adam Michnick, now interned in Bialoleka prison in Poland, recently wrote, in an article smuggled out of the prison, that "the Communist system in Poland was a colossus with clay feet but with hands of steel." But Mr. Laqueur's assessment fails to recognize the real importance of the events in Poland since August 1980, and the significance of the Solidarity movement for the present resistance to the military junta.

To Mr. Laqueur the rise of Solidarity is merely one more in a series of failed uprisings against Soviet-imposed rule in Eastern Europe. For him, Solidarity's major failing was that it did not foresee its imminent destruction by Poland's own security forces. . . .

Yet the very existence of Solidarity proved what the Polish people had come to realize: no change could start from the top. The events in Poland are markedly different from the Prague Spring, the Hungarian revolution, or from the series of rebellions in Poland itself. After the failed revolts of 1956, 1970, and 1976, the workers in 1980 demanded more than Gierek's and Gomulka's forced promises of reform. They demanded their own free trade union with which to defend themselves against the arbitrary and lawless actions of the party-state apparatus. The Solidarity movement, of course, was much more than a trade union. It was an institutional force that allowed society to express itself outside the state. For the first time in a Communist country, a whole nation organized itself democratically and peacefully against a system that had destroyed the economic, political, and cultural life of the country. For the first time, there was a mass movement able to exact change from the Communist authorities.

These gains should not now be cavalierly dismissed. Freedoms never before exhibited under Communist rule were allowed. People were able to express themselves with more freedom and less fear than they had ever known.

This underestimation of Solidarity's gains by Mr. Laqueur results perhaps from his perception of Solidarity as overly optimistic and confident. From the beginning, however, the leaders and activists undertook their struggle understanding the great risks involved. They were fully aware that the state had used enough force in the past to crush opposition. They also understood

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that the only strength of the Solidarity movement lay in its overwhelming support among the people. As with the democratic-opposition movement that had been active during the 1970's, the underlying basis of Solidarity was in its strategy of opposing the state rather than capitulating to it.

When the Polish United Workers party in November 1981 submitted proposals to the parliament to institute a ban on strikes and to establish special emergency powers similar to the ones Jaruzelski assumed in December, it was clear that a showdown was about to take place. What can be said is that most people did not expect the showdown to occur as soon as it did with the precision with which is was carried out. But it was not overconfidence that had overcome Solidarity.

Now the Jaruzelski junta has crushed Solidarity as a trade union. . . . But Jaruzelski has failed to crush Solidarity as a national movement which expresses the great desire of the Polish people for freedom, democracy, and, most important, independence. As Michnik writes, "These fifteen months were a lesson in freedom. You can wash Solidarity off the house walls but not off people's memory."

Although the "active" resistance to the state of war—over 700 strikes occurred throughout Poland in the first weeks after December 13—has been brutally crushed by army tanks and armed riot police, passive resistance remains strong. Activists who have remained outside of the 70 "isolation centers" have begun publishing clandestine bulletins, organizing Solidarity underground, and, with the great support of the Church, aiding those imprisoned and those fired from their jobs. Over 90 such underground bulletins exist on a regular basis, and over 1,000 different publications have appeared in some form. They all offer instruction in passive resistance, underground organizing, and disseminating information about the current situation in Poland. . . . Unlike previous rebellions in Poland, this one has the basis for a broad network of resistance.

When reading bulletins, one gets a clear sense that, despite the harshest conditions ever imposed in postwar Poland—mere possession of a leaflet has resulted in three years' imprisonment—the people believe organized resistance is still the only hope for change. Zbigniew Bujak, chairman of Warsaw Solidarity, now in hiding, has said that the resistance movement is prepared for a long struggle if necessary.

It seems that Mr. Laqueur would dismiss such resistance to a Communist regime so long as the Soviet Union remains unchanged. Indeed, he argues that movements like Solidarity are doomed to failure and that change can only occur when initiated by the ruling apparatus itself.

This is not an academic question, it concerns the strategy to be pursued for peaceful, democratic change in the Soviet empire. If now is not the time for the disintegration of the Soviet empire, one wonders how long we will have to wait. One wonders as well what signs would indicate such a disintegration, if Solidarity itself and the brutal measures used to crush it are not considered evidence of a certain erosion.

Mr. Laqueur states that we in the West had become too complacent about the "irreversible" gains of Solidarity. In his view, we had discounted the idea of a bloody crackdown short of a Soviet invasion, which was held to be an improbable option. This, of course, is an oversimplification. Many in the West did understand that there were great risks being taken every step of the way. However, the real question is not whether Solidarity's supporters were too complacent but rather why there was no policy that attempted to defend the gains of Solidarity. . . .

It is quite clear that during the entire Polish crisis, neither the Carter nor the Reagan administration gave much thought to events in Poland. The only policy put forward during the whole period, besides agreements to ship chickenfeed, were declarations that the Soviet Union had better not invade or else. Certainly no policy was devised to respond to an internal crackdown with the backing of the Soviet Union.

As one Solidarity leader stated succinctly, "We cannot rely on anything from the West." Indeed, the hope of the West is that those who resist totalitarianism from within will depend only on the strength of popular resistance. But if those in the West who hope for change in the Communist world are convinced that there must first be . . . change in the Soviet Union, popular resistance in Poland will be weakened. And if we are convinced that national mass movements such as Solidarity are inevitably doomed, a cohesive foreign policy will remain unattainable. Mr. Laqueur does put forward a policy of exacerbating the strong internal contradictions of the Soviet system and its empire. But if such a policy assumes the natural disintegration of the system and its empire, one must then ask what is to replace the totalitarian structure.

A strong foreign policy would be necessary whether or not Solidarity ever existed, if only for the "self-preservation" of Western democratic civilization. However, a foreign policy should also have as its goal the strengthening of democratic movements and ultimately the success of democratic change.

ERIC CHENOWETH
Committee in Support of Solidarity
New York City

"The Refusers"

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I am writing, not to take issue with Ruth R. Wisse's thoughtful review of my book, *The Refusers* ["Jewish Dreams," March], but to clear up a possible confusion.

The book's third section, of which the reviewer writes with generous praise, concerns my father, whose name Mrs. Wisse gives, correctly, as Ludwig Bernstein. In the book, however, in order to stress the fact that my father's life was an emblem, a symbol, a paradigm of the modern liberated Jew, he is not named except by the words that people used in addressing him: Ludwig, The Doctor. He is not a historical figure as was Moses or Uriel da Costa, to whom the other two sections of the book are devoted, nor did I make him one. (My own name was changed at my childless British uncle's request who was christened Burnshaw by His Majesty's government in World War I.)

I should add a word about Mrs. Wisse's remarks on the work of "the father of the Yiddish stage." Any similarity between my treatment of Uriel da Costa and that of Abraham Goldfaden lies past my power of explaining: of all the numerous scholars who offered me their guidance—from Salo Baron to Rena and Henry Fuks of Amsterdam—none so much as mentioned the playwright's name. My main historical sources were Uriel's autobiography (London, 1740), Carl Gebhardt's *Die Schriften des Uriel da Costa,* scholarly journals in French and English, and the records of the city of Amsterdam.

STANLEY BURNSHAW
Key Biscayne, Florida

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"Reds"

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I am at home in a number of languages, but in none of them could I find any words adequate to convey how impressed I was by Richard Grenier's brilliant article on *Reds* ["Bolshevism for the 80's," March]. . . .

My late husband Bertram Wolfe and I had the good fortune of knowing Angelica Balabanoff quite well over the years. She was a member of Lenin's cabinet from 1917 when the revolution broke out until the end of 1921 when she left the party and the country. When you read Angelica Balabanoff's memoir of John Reed, in her essay, "Last Days," you know you are reading a person of integrity. It is true that her picture of Louise Bryant is less black than Mr. Grenier's (though his, of course, is closer to the truth), but she was more sentimental and naive; for her the word "worker" was a holy word, as was the word "revolution"—until she found that the revolution was no longer hers.

ELLA WOLFE
Palo Alto, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

After the mindless drivel praising Warren Beatty's film, *Reds*, it was a relief to read Richard Grenier's intelligent, well-documented criticism. . . . In preparing the film, Beatty commissioned a number of people to interview those who had known John Reed, yet the film's portrayal of Reed and Louise Bryant as handsome idealists is false. Mr. Grenier rightly points out that Reed was a potato-faced sophomore rather than a combination of Prometheus and Adonis. Louise Bryant was an unprincipled social climber who, after Reed's death, married William Bullitt, Franklin D. Roosevelt's first ambassador to the Soviet Union and then to France. Divorced by him, she disintegrated morally even further and died a pathetic death. In addition to the totally false representation of the two main characters, there are a number of other inaccuracies in the film, some of which Mr. Grenier points out.

But there is more to the film's dishonesty than meets the eye. A far greater man than Reed was Bertram Wolfe, the author of *Three Who Made a Revolution*, a book which remains a classic account of the origins and practice of Bolshevism. Wolfe's life was entwined with that of Reed, to whom he refers frequently in his autobiography, *A Life in Two Centuries*. Wolfe would have been the most important source of information about Reed, but he died tragically in 1977. He is survived by his widow, Ella Wolfe, a remarkable woman who also knew Reed well and whose testimony, in the absence of her husband, was the best available. She told me about two years ago that Beatty's people planned to interview her . . . and that she would stress Reed's disillusionment with the Bolshevik Revolution. What happened? Beatty did send two people to see Mrs. Wolfe, one of whom spent ten days interviewing her and working on Bertram Wolfe's papers at the Hoover Institution archives; the other one tape-recorded interviews lasting over ten hours. In the film, all kinds of minor characters appear, but a key figure in the drama, Bertram Wolfe, does not. And Ella Wolfe, whose recollections are worth more than all the others put together, is not even listed among the forty-odd people, some of whom did not even know Reed, who are given credit in the film for their testimony. One of them is quoted as saying, "Some specialists have said that Reed was disillusioned with the revolution, but that of course is nonsense." That takes care of Mrs. Wolfe's position. . . .

Actually, Reed was disillusioned not with the revolution but with those who turned out to be bad Communists. Why should Reed be accused of unorthodoxy? He planned to expound his interpretation of the revolution in a volume he never finished, *Kornilov to Brest-Litovsk*. However, his preface to the 1919 edition of *Ten Days That Shook the World* is sufficiently eloquent. After surveying the struggle among the various groups, ending in the triumph of the Bolsheviks, he concludes: "The Bolsheviks were the only party in Russia with a constructive program and the power to impose it on the country. . . . It was one of the most marvelous adventures mankind ever embarked upon sweeping at the head of the toiling masses. . . . In the struggles my sympathies were not neutral." There is no evidence anywhere that Reed was disillusioned with Communism as such.

Much has been made of the scene in *Reds* in which Emma Goldman expresses her disillusionment with the revolution because it jailed anarchists like her. Yet there is nothing in *Reds* which even a Kremlin censor could not approve of. Day after day, the Soviet press damns deviants from the party line and those who use the party for their personal advancement. To make Zinoviev the villain of the film is perfectly acceptable; he was after all purged and became a non-person in the Soviet Union. . . .

What about the United States? In the *World Affairs Report*, we always run a section on the American way of life as seen in the Soviet press, and the targets are the same ones hit in *Reds*: bourgeois society, the government, the law. In *Reds*, there is not one good word about the American system. . . .

While spreading this anti-American poison around the world, Beatty had the gall in his speech accepting his Oscar for directing *Reds* to exalt the United States for allowing him to make such a film. Hollywood often drives us to despair, but, surprisingly, it redeemed itself by giving the best picture award to *Chariots of Fire*, a film which gives a better idea of what our civilization is all about. . . .

RONALD HILTON
Editor, *World Affairs Report*
California Institute of
International Studies
Stanford, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Richard Grenier's brilliant article puts him in the company of a handful of first-rate American critics who refused to be bowled over by the film's enormous budget and soggy sentimentality. Despite the contention of many reviewers that *Reds* was the best work of art since *Citizen Kane*, what we were presented with was another bloated spectacle that is strong around the edges and soft at its core. Once again, we are witness to the confusion that exists in people's minds between a director's ambition and the execution of his vision. Warren Beatty has labored for years to produce a movie that looks like a speed course in Marxism combined with out-takes from *Doctor Zhivago*. . . .

It's no wonder that Beatty has finally won acceptance and awards; he's made a "controversial" film that couldn't offend anybody. By turning a fascinating period in history that deserves examination into melodrama, he has abandoned the role of artist in favor of one as a popular entertainer. . . .

DAN O'NEILL
Los Angeles, California

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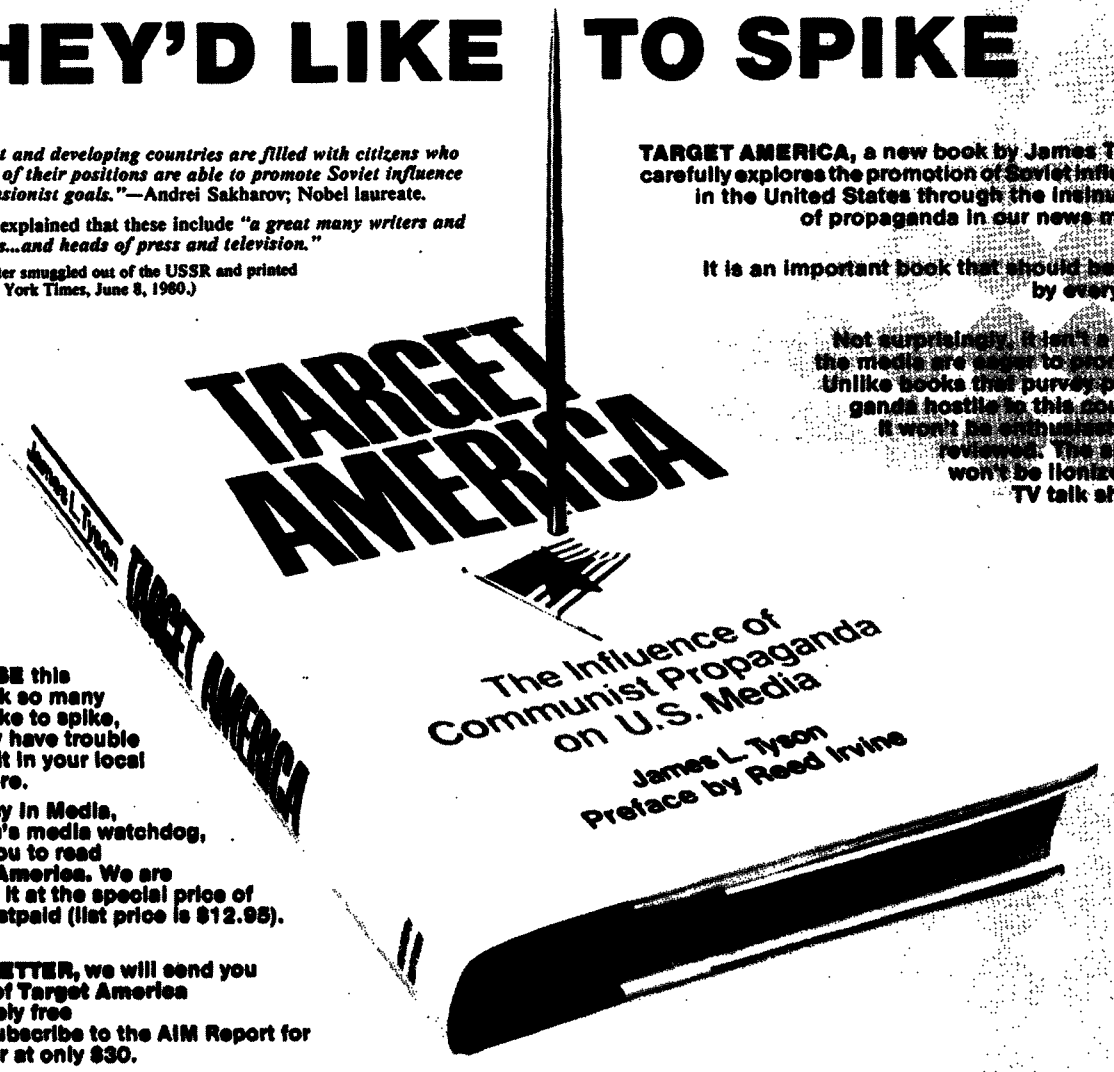

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TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Instead of the twelve Academy Award nominations that went to *Reds*, one great big award should have gone to Richard Grenier for his review.

JOSEPH K. MARCUS
Katonah, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . I consider *Reds*, and the responses to it, including those of Ronald Reagan and the American Communist party, the most eye-opening experience I have had since my arrival in the West from Russia in 1972.

Richard Grenier writes that "*Reds* hardly endorses the Bolshevik Revolution (in fact at the end, in gentle tones, it even condemns it)."

Soviet schoolbooks on history, propagandistic as they are, say that the Bolsheviks, having received only 25 percent of the vote for the Constituent Assembly, seized power by armed force and smashed the Constituent Assembly and all democratic "bourgeois" institutions. Soviet propaganda obviously cannot depart too far from Soviet schoolbooks.

Reds simply ignores these facts. The "people of Russia" (except for a handful of bandits who attack a train "somewhere in Asia" at the end of the movie) are shown in *Reds* as a single, united, roaring, ecstatic apotheosis of the "Russian Revolution." It is not even clear in the movie that the March revolution in Russia established full-fledged democracy, and it was this that Lenin smashed in his November putsch.

Through its newspaper, the American Communist party has endorsed the film enthusiastically; Soviet officialdom has done the same. Well they might. The film is *not* Soviet propaganda. Never has Soviet propaganda produced anything like it. The film is, if I may say so, super-Soviet super-propaganda, taking advantage of widespread Western ignorance of the history of the Bolshevik Revolution, ignorance so profound that it does not even reach the level of Soviet schoolbooks.

Mr. Grenier states that John Reed's *Ten Days That Shook the World* "provides the most vivid eyewitness account" of Lenin's military coup. "Almost ironically," Mr. Grenier continues, "early Soviet leaders" found the book "the most coherent rendition of those October days written by anybody of any nationality, including Russian, and it became, for a time, one of their sacred books."

I thought that Lenin *et al.* combed the dictionaries for insults and curses when Karl Kautsky, "the Karl Marx of today" as Lenin had previously called him, dared to see the Bolshevik Revolution differently from Lenin. Yes, John Reed's book was "one of [the Soviet leaders'] sacred books" because it was their propaganda—their own view of themselves. . . .

Mr. Grenier's attempts to show that *Reds* "even condemns" the Bolshevik Revolution remind me of attempts by some well-meaning Soviet dissident critics to read overtones of secret dissent and heresy into the pure saccharine of conformist Soviet productions. . . .

The *Reds* phenomenon has shown me more than any other event during my stay in the West that Warren Beatty *and* nearly all reviewers of his film—the leftist *Village Voice* editorialists *and* the conservative columnists William F. Buckley, Jr. and John Chamberlain, the American Communist party *and* the conservative Republican Ronald Reagan—live in an amazingly parochial, sheltered, and homogenized cultural universe of philistine fairy tales about the outside world. There is hardly any need to note that this is a Left-biased cultural universe, the universe of one unofficial political party, the liberal Democrats, and, for all the latest talk about the "shift to the Right," a universe that has maintained its leftward drift. Just imagine the reaction to a movie entitled *Nazis* and celebrating "youth, beauty, and the origin of National Socialism," with Mr. Beatty starring as the heroic idealist Horst Wessel.

"The political love of his [Reed's] life was the infant Bolshevik Republic, viewed in 1917," Mr. Grenier exclaims, "when hearts were young, hopes were high, and the brightest dreams seemed possible. This euphoric paradise degenerated. . . ."

The "infant Bolshevik Republic" in the first three years of its existence (1918 to 1920) was more cruel than Nazi Germany in the first three years of *its* existence (1933 to 1935). Never even under Stalin was torture so widespread, barbarous, and arbitrary as in the period from 1918 to 1920, when Reed was in Russia. Besides, torture was mentioned in the press to terrorize the population, so Reed could not even pretend not to know about it, as the later "idealists" could.

Mr. Grenier represents Reed as an idealist ("the idealistic haze through which he saw women was the same idealistic haze through which he saw the socialist future"). John Reed was as much of an idealist as, say, Horst Wessel was. Or perhaps less. If both were idealists, then what is idealism? The urge to grovel before a totalitarian ruler, to obtain from him fame, importance, power as payment in kind, and to be tearful about it, Warren Beatty-style?

Or is it that as soon as the magic word "Left" is applied to a Horst Wessel, the ruthless collaborator, egocentric bigot, and unscrupulous liar becomes a truth-seeking daydreamer, too good and trusting and delicate for this world?

LEV NAVROZOV
New York City

RICHARD GRENIER writes:

I thank Ronald Hilton, Dan O'Neill, and Joseph K. Marcus for their kind letters, and especially Ella Wolfe, to whose late husband, Bertram, we all owe so much.

As for Lev Navrozov, I honor him for his wounds. Do we really all look the same to him: Reagan, Buckley, the *Village Voice*, the American Communist party? I am not widely thought to be a shameless apologist for the Soviet Union, but shall be very careful in the future.

Intelligence

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Diane Ravitch's perceptive review of Stephen Jay Gould's *The Mismeasure of Man* [Books in Review, February] concentrates on Gould's dubious implication that past inadequate attempts to measure intelligence somehow demonstrate the inadequacy of contemporary attempts to measure intelligence. Mrs. Ravitch considers only briefly the central flaw in Gould's attack on contemporary measurement. It might be worthwhile to address this more closely, for it is on Gould's contention that current attempts to measure intelligence "reify" intelligence, and therefore render all such attempts worthless, that Gould's argument succeeds or fails.

"Intelligence" is a meaningful word. We know this because we know that people tend—statistically speaking, as always—to identify the same individuals as "intelligent." This fact means that, however difficult it might be to verbalize what we mean by "intelligence" (it's not all *that* difficult), the word does have meaning, and individuals do differ in "intelligence." . . .

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Those who deny that IQ tests test "intelligence" cannot explain why, when you intuitively rank twenty acquaintances by "intelligence," you find that the order in which you ranked the twenty is highly correlated with the order of IQ scores. . . .

One cannot avoid the possibility of hereditary causation either by denying the meaning of "intelligence" or the ability of IQ tests to measure "intelligence."

Despite all the attempts to demonstrate the importance of environmental events in determining IQ scores, and all the claims that IQ tests are inevitably culturally biased, the environmentalists have not seriously addressed the devastating hereditarian claim that the *more* a test is culturally biased (at least in terms of general information, i.e. "Who is Beverly Sills?"), the *smaller* the differences between the scores attained by various ethnic groups. This "fact"—if the hereditarians are correct and it is a fact—at first seems unbelievable, but it may merely indicate that most people know this type of information because they have learned it from television news or the *Tonight* show. The better IQ tests do not use informational questions of this sort, but it appears that if they did . . . group differences would be reduced. This casts the most serious doubt on the claim that "cultural bias" explains group differences.

With all this in mind, it is not difficult to see the central flaw in Gould's attack on the validity of contemporary IQ tests. The core of Gould's argument has been succinctly summarized by R.C. Lewontin in his review of Gould's book. Lewontin writes:

> The height of a person is a natural attribute of a real person. If I average the heights of ten people, that average is not an attribute of any real object. There is no person with such a height, nor does it characterize the height of the collection of individuals since a collection of people does not have a height. The average is not even a height. It is simply the sum of a lot of measurements divided by the number of measurements. To assert that it is a real attribute of a real thing is an act of reification (indeed, double reification).

The only possible response to such a ridiculous attempt to dismiss IQ tests is "so what?" If by "reification" Gould means that intelligence is not physical in the same way that height is, we can grant this for argument's sake (though I doubt that the distinction would withstand rigorous analysis). Yet granting this does nothing to cast doubt on the reality of intelligence, on the fact that people differ in intelligence, or on the *possibility* that heredity plays an important role in determining group differences in intelligence. If by "reification" Gould means that averages are statistical abstractions, we will certainly agree, but our agreement alters nothing: the average height of all Pygmies is a statistical abstraction as is the average height of all Watusis. But this casts no doubt on the reality of height, the fact that Watusis are taller than Pygmies, the fact that we can know this by comparing statistical averages, or the fact that heredity accounts for most of the height difference between Pygmies and Watusis (though, of course, this hereditary difference may have originated long, long ago in some environmental event). . . .

None of this forces one to approve of IQ tests. Indeed, even if one believes that IQ tests are unquestionably of scientific validity and that group differences are unquestionably rooted in hereditary differences, he may validly oppose the use of such tests. He may feel (as I do) that intelligence is of limited importance to success in most areas of life for everyone and in all areas of life for most people. (Motivation is clearly far more important.) He may believe (as I do) that most of what is taught in school can be, if properly presented, taught even to the mildly retarded. But such positions have the virtue of refusing to invoke illogic in the service of social goals and of refusing to invoke invalid arguments in an attempt to demonstrate the invalidity of IQ tests.

STEVEN GOLDBERG
City College—CUNY
New York City

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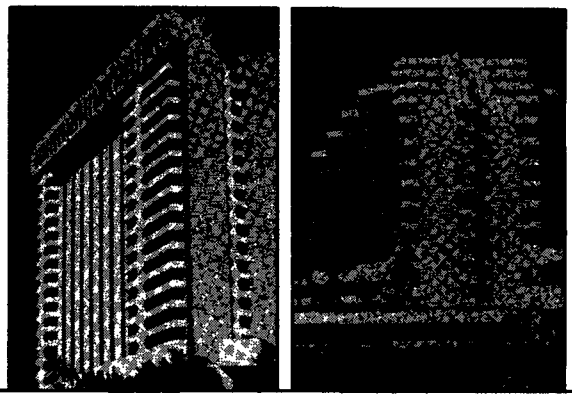

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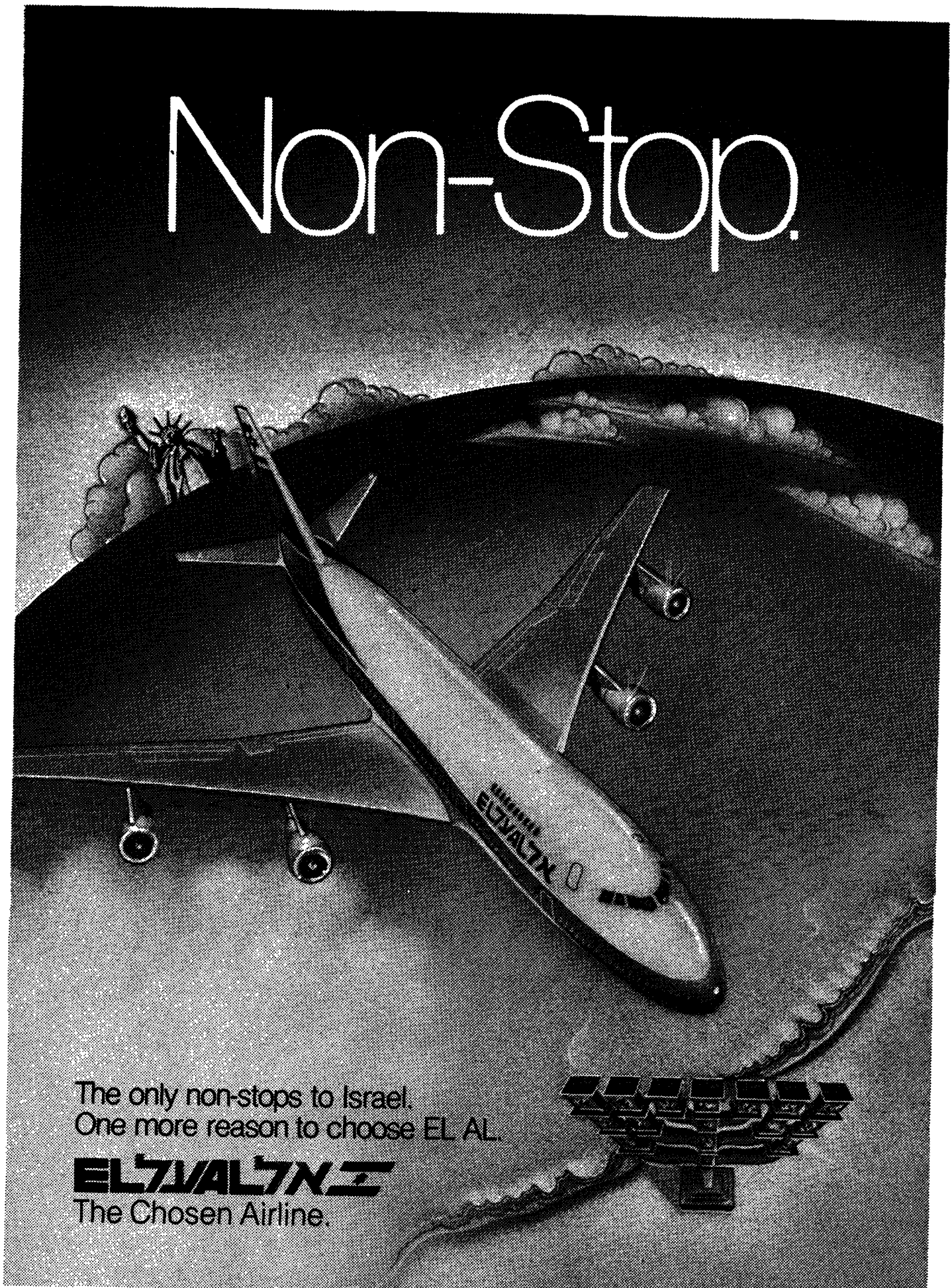

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Kissinger Reconsidered

Norman Podhoretz

READING *Years of Upheaval*, the second volume of Henry Kissinger's memoirs,* was for me a less overwhelming experience than reading its immediate predecessor, *White House Years*. But that was only because my astonishment at what Kissinger was capable of as a writer had already worn off by the time I had finished *White House Years* itself.

Kissinger in his disarming fashion likes to quote the reviewer of one of his early scholarly works who (allegedly) said: "I don't know if Dr. Kissinger is a great writer, but anyone who gets through this book is certainly a great reader." If the remark was ever in fact made, it was an exaggeration. Kissinger as a professor wrote in a serviceable academic style, which was no worse than the prose of most of his colleagues in the fields of political science and international affairs. On the other hand, he was certainly not as lively or as lucid a stylist as certain of his academic colleagues. Be that as it may, if memory serves, there was little if anything of a literary nature in his earlier work to prepare us for *White House Years*. We did, however, have *White House Years* to prepare us for *Years of Upheaval* which, although self-contained in the sense of being entirely intelligible on its own, is really a continuation (though not yet the completion) of the same book. When in due course the third and final volume comes out, we will have a single unit running to some 4,000 densely printed pages. And it will be—it already is—one of the great works of our time.

I use the word "great" both reluctantly and advisedly: reluctantly because I do not wish to contribute to the inflationary tendencies which have debauched the language of literary criticism as surely as they have the currency of monetary exchange; but advisedly because in this case the epithet for once designates the true value being claimed.

There is also another reason to insist on the word great here, and that is the failure of so many who have written about these memoirs to give them their proper due. It is one thing to quarrel with Kissinger about his ideas and his policies; I will be doing just that myself. But it is quite another matter when no awareness is shown of the high intellectual distinction with which those ideas are explicated and the policies defended. And it is altogether scandalous when people who presumably care about books as much as they do about politics are unable to recognize or unwilling to acclaim a masterwork when they see one because they are blinded or moved by political bias. Yet with an occasional, and surprising, exception like Christopher Lehmann-Haupt and Stanley Hoffmann, the reviewers first of *White House Years* and now of *Years of Upheaval* have either been unremittingly hostile or grudging in their acknowledgment of what Kissinger has done here.

Admittedly the length of these volumes is a problem, if only because they demand more time than most of us nowadays are willing to give to a book. Yet as an editor who has been known to cut a manuscript now and again and to judge the briefer version an improvement, I would have found it very difficult to shorten either *White House Years* or *Years of Upheaval* without sacrificing something good. It is true that in order to make *Years of Upheaval* self-contained, Kissinger goes over a certain amount of territory already traversed in *White House Years*. But aside from such patches of repetition, these volumes are astonishingly free of either padding or gratuitous detail. One might well say of them what Dr. Johnson said of *Paradise Lost*, that "none ever wished it longer than it is," while at the same time recognizing that they are not too long for what they deliver.

This does not mean that every page is equally interesting. So much ground is covered, so many subjects are explored in such rich and sometimes technical detail, that inevitably every reader will come upon sections that seem arid or dull. But even those sections (for example, discussions of the debate over SALT, or some of the minute-by-minute accounts of Kissinger's negotiations with foreign governments) are necessary to the historical record. Moreover, they always reward careful attention and often turn out to be as fascinating

NORMAN PODHORETZ is the editor of COMMENTARY. His most recent books are *The Present Danger* and *Why We Were in Vietnam*, both published by Simon & Schuster.

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as they appear forbidding. Indeed, not the least stunning of Kissinger's talents as a writer is his ability to do justice to the technical complexities of a subject like arms control while making those complexities clear to any lay reader who is willing to slow down a bit and invest a little extra intellectual effort.

The paradox is that Kissinger unwittingly discourages the reader from exerting himself on such occasions by making it so easy for him the rest of the time. Hard as it is to pick these volumes up (in addition to being so long and looking so forbidding, they weigh about five pounds each), it is harder still to put them down. A reader who approaches them as a duty will invariably be rewarded with a pleasure: a wonderful story told wonderfully well.

It is not, however, as might have been expected, the story of Kissinger's spectacular career. There is almost nothing of a personal nature here. From time to time he refers to his origins as a Jewish refugee from Germany, or his years as a Harvard professor and as an adviser to Nelson Rockefeller. He tells us too how he happened to be hired by Richard Nixon in 1968 as National Security Adviser and he explains why Nixon later decided to appoint him Secretary of State. But whereas Kissinger provides dozens of character sketches throughout these two volumes, the best of them breathtaking in their evocative power, and the least of them shrewd in their psychological insight, he shows no such gift for self-portraiture and no inclination toward the introspective. On the evidence of these memoirs, one would have to conclude that this man—who has become legendary for his arrogance and egomania—is if anything abnormally deficient in curiosity about himself. His interest in everyone and everything else in the world, by contrast, seems inexhaustible.

To convey some idea of how this combination of qualities works to control and color Kissinger's narrative style, let me take as a random example the account in *Years of Upheaval* of his first visit to Saudi Arabia in 1973, only two weeks after the oil embargo had been declared.

He begins here, as always, by setting the political context—in this instance Nixon's desperate desire to get the embargo lifted, not only for its own sake but in order to demonstrate his mastery of foreign policy and hence buttress "his claim to continue in office" just at the point when "Watergate was winding its inexorable way through congressional and judicial procedures." Having spelled out the domestic political forces that influenced the workings of the episode, Kissinger then goes on to place it in its local setting by means of an analysis of Saudi Arabia in which history, geography, religion, and national psychology are interwoven and interrelated in a tour de force of compression and lucidity. Then comes a typical humorous description of his reception, accompanied by a disquisition on the cultural implications of the physical and architectural surroundings which are themselves presented with a vividness beyond the literary powers of a good many contemporary novelists:

> Faisal's palace was on a monumental scale. Preceded by two sword carriers, I was taken to a tremendous hall that seemed as large as a football field. Dozens of the distinguished men of the Kingdom (women, of course, being strictly segregated) in identical black robes and white headdresses were seated along the walls, immobile and silent. There was incense in the air, circulated by the air conditioning. What seemed like a hundred yards away on a slightly raised pedestal sat King Faisal ibn Abd al-Aziz Al Sa'ud, aquiline of feature, regal of bearing. He rose as I entered, forcing all the princes and sheiks to follow suit in a flowing balletlike movement of black and white. He took one step toward me: I had to traverse the rest of the way. I learned later that his taking a step forward was a sign of great courtesy. At the time, I was above all conscious of the seeming eternity it took to reach the pedestal.

In one respect, this passage is untypical, since it leads straight into a rare reference to Kissinger's personal background ("His Majesty and I sat side by side for a few minutes overlooking the splendid assemblage while I reflected in some wonder what strange twists of fate had caused a refugee from Nazi persecution to wind up in Arabia as the representative of American democracy"). But we soon discover, what we might already have suspected, that the reference is not a gratuitous touch. It is there because it is essential to a full appreciation of the outlandish aspect of Kissinger's encounter with Faisal, who proceeds to tell him that

> Jews and Communists were working now in parallel, now together, to undermine the civilized world as we knew it. Oblivious to my ancestry—or delicately putting me into a special category—Faisal insisted that an end had to be put once and for all to the dual conspiracy of Jews and Communists. The Middle East outpost of that plot was the State of Israel, put there by Bolshevism for the principal purpose of dividing America from the Arabs.

Kissinger's comment on this outburst—the smile playing over the prose, the wit, the wry self-deprecation both concealing and revealing enormous self-confidence—is characteristic of the way he talks about himself throughout these memoirs:

> It was hard to know where to begin in answering such a line of reasoning. When Faisal went on to argue that the Jewish-Communist conspiracy was now trying to take over the American government, I decided the time had come to change the subject. I did so by asking His

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> Majesty about a picture on the far wall, which I took to be a decorative work of art. It was a holy oasis, I was informed—representational art being forbidden in Islam. This faux pas threw Faisal into some minutes of deep melancholy, causing conversation around the table to stop altogether. In the unearthly silence my colleagues must have wondered what I had done so quickly to impair the West's oil supplies. I did not help matters by referring to Sadat as the leader of the Arabs. His Majesty's morose reaction showed that there was a limit beyond which claims to Arab solidarity could be pushed.

After a few more amusing details about the way this weird conversation was conducted, Kissinger, modulating smoothly into a serious key, composes a little essay on the mind and character of King Faisal so thoroughly informed by sympathetic imagination that it even manages to make a kind of sense out of the speech on Communism and Zionism:

> However bizarre it sounded to Western visitors, [Faisal's speech] was clearly deeply felt. At the same time it reflected precisely the tactical necessities of the Kingdom. The strident anti-Communism helped reassure America and established a claim on protection against outside threats.... The virulent opposition to Zionism reassured radicals and the PLO and thus reduced their incentive to follow any temptation to undermine the monarchy domestically. And its thrust was vague enough to imply no precise consequences: it dictated few policy options save a general anti-Communism.

The section on this visit to Riyadh then moves toward its conclusion with a meticulous account of the negotiating sessions between Faisal and Kissinger, which, like the dozens of other such accounts scattered throughout these memoirs, gives a superlative picture of how diplomacy is actually conducted.

What we have here is writing of the very highest order. It is writing that is equally at ease in portraiture and abstract analysis; that can shape a narrative as skillfully as it can paint a scene; that can achieve marvels of compression while moving at an expansive and leisurely pace. It is writing that can shift without strain or falsity of tone from the *gravitas* befitting a book about great historical events to the humor and irony dictated by an unfailing sense of human proportion.

KISSINGER the writer, then, has established a secure claim to greatness. But that is not the claim he is staking in these memoirs. What he wants, above all, is to explain and defend his achievements as a diplomat or (to use the word he himself generally prefers) a statesman. On this point too his memoirs are a surprise. For what they reveal is that if Kissinger did achieve greatness in this area, it was as a practitioner of the art of diplomacy, and not as the "conceptualizer" he was always praised for being.

The reason this is surprising, of course, is that he was, after all, an intellectual rather than a professional diplomat. He had studied and taught and written about international affairs, but when he became Nixon's chief adviser on foreign policy in 1968 he had had very little practical experience in diplomacy or the conduct of high-level negotiations. During the Kennedy and Johnson administrations he had done a certain amount of consulting and he had participated on a relatively low level in one or two diplomatic missions. But that, so far as we can tell from the memoirs, was all.

Of McGeorge Bundy, who blazed the trail Kissinger was to follow from Harvard to the post of National Security Adviser, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. could say with typical Cambridge smugness: "I had seen him learn how to dominate the faculty of Harvard University, a throng of intelligent and temperamental men; after that training, one could hardly doubt his capacity to deal with Washington bureaucrats." But unlike Bundy, who had been a dean, Kissinger had only been a professor. Hence he had not even had a chance to learn the game of power in the interdepartmental conflicts of the academic jungle before graduating into the real jungles of international conflict where the stakes are so much higher and the talents required to play are of an entirely different order.

Because Kissinger is so incurious—or perhaps only reticent—about himself, we learn nothing from these memoirs that would help us understand how this intellectual, this professor, with no practical diplomatic experience to speak of, could with perfect assurance and a poise that would normally require many years of training to develop, leap overnight and in one bound into the topmost reaches of international statesmanship. There is nothing here to explain how this naturalized American, still speaking with a heavy German accent and (presumably) still carrying the burdens of uncertainty and inner doubt that afflict all refugees and to which even native-born American Jews of Kissinger's generation have so often been prey, could, again overnight, begin dealing on equal terms with all the major figures of the age.

As in the passage quoted above about his first meeting with King Faisal of Saudi Arabia, Kissinger is fond of poking gentle fun at himself for the gaucheries and faux pas he always seems to be committing on his breathless and bewildering diplomatic rounds from one country to another, each with its own manners and mores and hence with its own innumerable opportunities for getting things wrong. In one place he talks out of turn; in another he fails to follow the right procedure in reviewing the troops who have come to honor him; in a third he elicits a pained response for his American obtuseness in missing a subtle sig-

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nal during the course of a negotiation. But it goes without saying that this easy willingness to tell funny stories at his own expense is the surest mark of a supreme self-confidence.

And indeed, far from being thrown by the requirements of his job as the official envoy of the United States of America and the main shaper of its relations with the rest of the world, he demonstrates a mastery that is all but incredible. In the same month, or the same week, or even on the same day, he will turn his attention to the technicalities of the SALT negotiations, the intricacies of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the problems of the Atlantic Alliance, and the niceties of the developing relation with China. When he is traveling, especially during the "shuttle diplomacy" that he conducted after the Yom Kippur war between Israel and Egypt, and then Israel and Syria, he maintains an alert sense of the issues and the personalities he is dealing with, while simultaneously supervising all the other business of his office.

Sleepless, racked by jet lag, assailed by a multitude of crises, he never seems to tire to the point of losing his edge or growing impatient with the nuances that are—so he repeatedly tells us—the lifeblood of diplomacy. He always seems to know where he is, he always seems to keep a fascinated and wary eye on his interlocutor, he is rarely at a loss for the humorous quip or the soothing remark or the daring proposal when an opening suddenly presents itself. When he meets with someone like Mao Zedong, whom he regards as a titanic historical figure, he can be awed without being overawed. But he is equally capable of taking the proper measure of a lesser personage like Assad of Syria without the condescension that is the surest path to stupidity in a diplomat. A believer in the centrality of power, he nevertheless has a judicious respect for even the least powerful of nations and the sensitivity of an anthropologist to the distinctive features and beauties of even the least imposing of cultures. No wonder he won the answering admiration and affection of so many of the leaders he dealt with, including many who counted themselves enemies of the United States.

If Kissinger ever suffered any anxiety in becoming National Security Adviser and then Secretary of State, or in performing the duties of those offices, it is not recorded in these memoirs. Being (as he would perhaps be willing to admit) human, he cannot be an absolute stranger to anxiety. But as a statesman he was at ease only as a man could be who had found the job that he was clearly born to do.

In this respect, the contrast between Kissinger and Nixon could not have been sharper or more poignant. In one of the most extraordinary passages of these memoirs—it comes toward the end of *Years of Upheaval*—Kissinger describes an automobile trip he took with Nixon and his friend Bebe Rebozo in California during the summer of 1970. What Nixon wanted was to show Kissinger and Rebozo the house where he was born and the town in which he grew up. After pointing out various landmarks of his childhood and his youth, "Nixon suddenly conceived the idea that Rebozo and I should see not only his origin but how far he had come." Accordingly he directed his driver to the place he had lived for two years after losing the presidential election of 1960 and where he had regained his sense of balance. But astonishingly, he was unable to locate it. Thus the President of the United States and his National Security Adviser spent well over an hour searching "every canyon and the streets leading off them" in the vicinity of the Beverly Hills Hotel, without ever finding the house they were looking for.

Rightly seeing in this episode an allegory of Nixon's life, Kissinger comments: "He was at ease with his youth; he could recount his struggles; he could not find the locus of his achievements. . . . On his way to success he had traveled on many roads, but he had found no place to stand, no haven, no solace, no inner peace. He never learned where his home was."

Henry Kissinger had traveled on many roads too, but unlike Nixon he did find a home. Quoting Archimedes ("Give me a place to stand and I shall move the earth"), Kissinger remarks that "Nixon sought to move the world but he lacked a firm foothold." Yet Kissinger obviously discovered a firm foothold in the very place that failed to provide one for the poor boy from Whittier who had put him there. Even in the White House Richard Nixon, the man who "lacked a firm foothold," remained "slightly out of focus." For he "had set himself a goal beyond human capacity: to make himself over entirely; to create a new personality as if alone of all mankind he could overcome his destiny." Not Kissinger. Though he does not say so himself, but as we know from the simple fact that this enormously ambitious man trying to make his way in circles not particularly hospitable to foreigners never even bothered to get rid of his accent, Kissinger was guilty of no such "presumption." Therefore he did not pay "the fearful price" he believes the gods exacted of Nixon: "the price of congenital insecurity." And thus it was that the refugee from Fürth, Germany, unlike the refugee from Whittier, California, found a home in Washington, and a firm foothold, and the sharpest possible focus for his talents and his energies, which then proceeded to pour forth in prodigious torrents of virtuoso activity.

WHETHER he moved the earth is, however, another question. What he attempted to do, always working with and often (it is important to remember) under the direction of Nixon, was to build a new "structure of peace" in

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the world. This involved, first, arranging for an "honorable" American withdrawal from Vietnam; second, establishing a new relationship with the Soviet Union to be known as détente and to be based on negotiation rather than confrontation; and third, inaugurating an American relationship with Communist China. All this was to be accomplished, moreover, within the context of a diminishing American presence in the world. Indeed, it was precisely because domestic support for American intervention abroad had been eroded by Vietnam that substitutes had to be found to prevent the balance of power, on which Kissinger and Nixon believed that peace depended, from tilting dangerously toward the Soviet Union.

In presiding over what was in effect a strategic retreat, Nixon and Kissinger were trying to make certain above all else that the retreat would not turn—as retreats are always in danger of doing—into a wholesale rout. This consideration in itself precluded a precipitous withdrawal from Vietnam. We had to leave in such a way as to give South Vietnam a fighting chance to save itself from conquest by the Communist North, thus vindicating the purpose of our own intervention and demonstrating the reliability of American commitments.

At the same time, we had to find a way to restrain Soviet expansionism that did not depend entirely or even largely on the use or the threatened use of American military power. This new strategy, as Nixon and Kissinger conceived it, was composed of two tactical strands. The first and more important was to offer incentives (mainly consisting of economic benefits) for Soviet moderation and restraint, and to threaten penalties (mainly consisting of the withdrawal of those benefits) for aggressive or adventurist activity. This, in essence, was what détente meant. Although the rhetoric in which Nixon and Kissinger and their supporters talked about it was usually more grandiose, détente was at bottom an effort to compensate for the loss of American military power (the will to use it as well as the relative edge in hardware) with a more purposeful deployment of economic power. In this scheme, the function of arms control was to keep the military balance stable, both for its own sake and because reducing the influence of the military factor would make the economic factor more effective.

The second tactical strand of the new strategy for containing the Soviet Union at a time of diminishing American power and will was the so-called Nixon Doctrine. This entailed finding regional allies or surrogates who would assume the responsibility for deterring Soviet expansionist moves and if necessary resisting them by force. The United States would supply arms for this purpose, but such regional surrogates as Iran under the Shah would do the rest. The opening to China, whatever else it may have been intended to accomplish—and there were undoubtedly many reasons for the move—has to be understood in the first instance as a product of the Nixon Doctrine. For China too was to be built up as yet another restraint on Soviet expansionism. No one, certainly not Kissinger, was so foolish as to think of the Chinese as an American surrogate. But playing the China card was undoubtedly part of the overall strategy of finding substitutes for the formerly all but exclusive reliance on American military power to contain the Soviet Union in Asia and indeed everywhere else in the world.

IT WAS, no doubt about it, a brilliant strategic conception, each element consistent with every other and all together blending into an organic whole. That it corresponded with Nixon's instincts and impulses we can be certain, and there is no way of knowing where exactly, in the collaboration between them, Nixon left off and Kissinger began. In general (so Kissinger tells us) Nixon in effect saw what had to be done and gave the orders to do it; the details of the execution were left to others—and where foreign policy was concerned, others meant Henry Kissinger.

This is not to suggest that the strategy was all Nixon and the tactics all Kissinger. For it was Kissinger who, at first under the pseudonym "a high official" and later openly in his own voice, took over the job of explaining and articulating the administration's policy—in press briefings, in interviews with influential columnists like James Reston, and in private conversations both with journalists and with Congressmen. Thus the exquisite balance and symmetry in the design of the overall strategy must surely have owed at least as much, and more, to Kissinger the intellectual, the "conceptualizer," as to Nixon the politician.

Whatever the share of responsibility—credit *or* blame—to be assigned to Kissinger, however, one might say of this strategy what Edmund Burke said of Lord North's treatment of the American colonies: "This fine-spun scheme had the usual fate of all exquisite policy." Brilliant though it was in achieving perfect internal coherence, it failed because it misjudged the nature of the Soviet threat on the one side and the nature of American public opinion on the other.

That men like Kissinger and Nixon should have misjudged the nature of the Soviet threat is on the face of it hard to believe. Neither one of them was in the least subject to sentimental illusions about the Soviet Union; neither had any sympathy for the Soviets or any admiration for their leaders. Whereas Kissinger writes about Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai with a respect bordering on and occasionally crossing over into reverence, he is sardonic about Brezhnev and Gromyko. Nor did Kissinger or Nixon ever doubt that the Soviet Union had expansionist aims or that it was capable of great ruthlessness in the pursuit of those aims.

At the same time, however, while Kissinger here,

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and Nixon in his own writings, always make their obeisances to the role of ideology in determining Soviet behavior on the international scene, for the most part they saw the Soviet Union as a nation-state like any other, motivated by the same range of interests that define and shape the foreign policies of all nation-states. From this perspective —the perspective of *Realpolitik*—Communist Russia was not all that different from Czarist Russia, the facts of geography, history, and ancestral culture being far more decisive than the ideas of Marx and Lenin.

If this were indeed the case, it would certainly be possible to make a deal of the kind contemplated by the policy of détente. If, in other words, the aims of the Soviet Union were limited, they could be respected and even to a certain extent satisfied through negotiation and compromise, with the resultant settlement policed by means other than, and short of, actual military force.

But what if the Soviet Union is not a "normal" nation-state? What if in this case ideology overrides interest in the traditional sense? What if Soviet aims are unlimited? In short (and to bring up the by-now familiar contending comparisons), what if the Soviet Union bears a closer resemblance to the Germany of Hitler than to the Germany of Kaiser Wilhelm? Wilhelmine Germany was an expansionist power seeking a place in the imperial sun and nothing more than that. Hitler, by contrast, was a revolutionary seeking to overturn the going international system and to replace it with a new order dominated by Germany (which also meant the political culture of Nazism). For tactical reasons and in order to mislead, Hitler sometimes pretended that all he wanted was the satisfaction of specific grievances, and those who were taken in by this pretense not unreasonably thought they could "do business" with him. But there was no way of doing business—that is, negotiating a peaceful settlement—with Hitler. As a revolutionary with unlimited aims, he offered only two choices: resistance or submission.

All the evidence suggests that the Soviet Union poses the same kind of threat, and the same narrow range of choices, to the West. It has committed itself by word and deed to the creation of a "socialist" world. There is no reason to think that it can be talked out of this commitment or even (as, at bottom, détente assumes) bribed out of it. It may well be, as we are often told, that the Soviet leaders no longer believe subjectively in Communism. But whatever they say to themselves in the privacy of their own minds, they are (to borrow from their own vocabulary) *objectively* the prisoners of Marxian and Leninist doctrines. Without these doctrines, which mandate steady international advances in the cause of "socialism," they have no way to legitimize their monopoly of power within the Soviet Union itself. Hence even if they wanted to limit their aims and become a "status-quo power," they would be unable to do so without committing political suicide.

What this means is that the conflict beween the Soviet Union and the West is not subject to resolution by the traditional tools of diplomacy. Or, to put the point another way, given the nature of the Soviet threat, détente is not possible. Certain agreements may be possible from time to time, but they will invariably cover ground (cultural exchanges, arrangements for travel and communications, and the like) that is peripheral or even trivial from the point of view of the central issue. Where really important ground is touched upon, the agreement will invariably result in a Soviet advantage.

This is not because the Soviets are necessarily better at negotiating than we are or because they will necessarily cheat. They may or may not be better and they may or may not cheat. It is, rather, because in any negotiation between a party with limited aims and a party with unlimited aims, the party with limited aims is bound to lose in the very nature of things. Even a deal that on the surface promises mutual benefits will work out to the advantage of the side pursuing a strategy of victory over the side pursuing a strategy of accommodation and peace.

Thus, for example—as Kissinger himself has had the honesty and the courage to admit—the expanded commercial relations that were supposed to encourage Soviet restraint did not prevent the invasion of Afghanistan or the repression of Solidarity in Poland (not to mention such earlier Soviet moves as the dispatch of Cuban proxies to Angola). But economic "linkages" did work to restrain the American response on each of these occasions and to paralyze the Europeans altogether.

The case of arms control is perhaps less obvious but it is no less telling. What have the SALT negotiations accomplished? SALT I, which Kissinger defends with his customary brilliance (but with uncustomary heat), may well have been the best agreement possible at the time. Nevertheless, whereas it did nothing to limit the build-up of Soviet strategic arms, it did contribute to the slowing down of the American build-up.

Again, this was not because the Soviets cheated (though they may have, just as a roulette wheel may be fixed though the house wins even when it is honest). It was because, as the history of disarmament agreements in this century should have taught everyone, such agreements result in disarming only the party that wants to disarm and not the party that has no intention of doing so. That is what happened after the naval agreements of the 20's and 30's, when the United States, the British, and the French did not even build up to their legal limits while the Japanese and then the Germans not only did so but invented ways of exceeding their quotas while remaining within the letter of the law. And it is exactly what happened after

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SALT I, a period in which the Soviet build-up continued on its relentless course in both quantity and quality while the United States was either standing still or actually cutting back.

Kissinger frequently argues that a tough policy toward the Soviet Union can only enlist the support of public opinion in the United States (and in the West generally) if it is accompanied by a strategy for peace. People, that is, must be convinced that their leaders are doing everything possible to resolve the conflict by peaceful means before they will vote for the increases in defense spending and before they will back the firm stands against Soviet expansionism that Kissinger himself has consistently favored as the indispensable foundation of American influence and as a necessary element even of a successful policy of détente.

But the historical record suggests the opposite. In relation first to Nazi Germany and then to Soviet Russia, Western public opinion was lulled by negotiated agreements and was only galvanized at those moments when the nature of the enemy revealed itself unambiguously in action.

Where Hitler was concerned, for example, it was not until the invasion of Poland that the British public finally awoke from the dream of Munich—that great monument to the illusion that Nazi Germany was a state like any other with limited and hence negotiable ambitions. In the case of the Soviet Union, this illusion comes and goes. It was blasted for the first time after the Czechoslovak coup of 1947, only to rise again during the period of de-Stalinization of the 50's, until it was blasted by the invasion of Hungary, only to rise again during the "thaw" of the 60's until it was blasted by the invasion of Czechoslovakia, only to rise again in the time of détente until it was blasted by the invasion of Afghanistan.

The trouble is that each time the illusion returns, it seems to grow stronger, fed by fear as the Soviet military arsenal also grows stronger. Now that it is rising again, it is indeed stronger than ever, forming the basis of the most explosive outburst of unilateralist sentiment yet to erupt in Western Europe, and of an anti-nuclear hysteria in the United States that is well on its way to becoming a more respectable cover for isolationism than any of the other disguises isolationism has recently assumed.

THE misreading of the nature of American public opinion that underlay détente was thus symbiotically connected to the misreading of the nature of the Soviet Union itself. The American people for better or worse have always been and still are very reluctant to support large standing armies, let alone to use them in combat, merely for geopolitical reasons. In the absence of some higher meaning, the idealistic Wilsonian strain in the American character is likely to be overwhelmed by the ever-present isolationist temptation. Therefore, as I once put it in these pages,* "by representing the Soviet Union as a competing superpower with whom we could negotiate peaceful and stable accommodations—instead of a Communist state hostile in its very nature to us and trying to extend its rule and its political culture over a wider and wider area of the world—the Nixon, Ford, and Carter administrations robbed the Soviet-American conflict of the moral and political dimensions for the sake of which sacrifices could be intelligibly demanded by the government and willingly made by the people."

In *Years of Upheaval* Kissinger calls this "the subtlest critique" of détente, but the generosity of his characterization does not imply agreement. "The argument that the American people cannot understand a complex challenge and a complex strategy to meet it," he writes, "that unable to handle both deterrence and coexistence it must base its policy on truculence, reflects a lack of faith in democracy."

Having so often been accused—though never by me—of lacking faith in democracy, Kissinger must have taken a special pleasure in thus turning the tables on some of his critics. But the issue here is not democracy; it is, rather, the nature of the American character. Kissinger, who is so good at delineating national character when he talks about other peoples, and whose mastery in practicing the art of diplomacy is so intimately tied to his respect for the limitations and possibilities flowing out of the national character of his opposite numbers, somehow refuses to see that the people of his own country, no less than the Chinese or the Israelis or the Vietnamese, are shaped by the facts of geography, history, religion, and culture and are therefore capable of certain things and not of others. He knows that it is foolish to demand of other nations what the facts of their situation make it impossible for them to give. But he seems not to know that this is equally true of the United States.

Given the nature of the American national character, a very high price had to be paid for the achievement of which Kissinger is perhaps most proud and for which the Nixon administration has been universally applauded—the opening to China. The strategic purpose of striking a de-facto alliance with Communist China was to enlist its help in containing Soviet imperialism. But the question arose then, and continues to bedevil us today, of whether a China allied to the United States contributes any more to the containment of the Soviet Union than a China treated with benign neglect. After all, the number of Soviet divisions pinned down on the Chinese border before Kissinger went to Beijing has not increased.

On the other hand, by befriending one of the

* "The Future Danger," April 1981.

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two great Communist colossi, we have made it harder to explain to ourselves what the struggle with the other is all about. In this way too the Soviet-American conflict has been robbed of the moral and political significance without which the dangers and the sacrifices it involves begin to seem pointless. People then begin to wonder why, if we can support Communist China, we should put ourselves at risk to resist Communist Russia. Why not let the Russians work their will in the Persian Gulf, or for that matter in Western Europe? Or, if the only objection to the establishment of Communist regimes in countries like Nicaragua and El Salvador is that they are tied to the Soviet Union, why not woo them away?

Indeed, underlying much discussion of these matters in the United States nowadays is the idea, rarely made explicit, but present in the logic of particular proposals, that the safest course for us is to help sponsor a world of Communist regimes which are independent of the Soviet Union. Instead of making the world safe for democracy, we are urged to make it safe for Titoism.

To the extent that the opening to China was part of the Nixon Doctrine, then, one can say that this component of the new strategy—a strategy, to repeat, aimed at finding substitutes for American military power at a time when that power was in relative decline and when the will to serve as "policeman of the world" was declining even further—rested on the same misjudgment of the American national character as did the détente policy which represented the other major component of the overall strategy.

Of course the Nixon Doctrine cannot yet be said to have failed the test of China. But it can most definitely be said to have failed the two other tests it has undergone. The first was in Vietnam, when after the withdrawal of American troops, the United States Congress doomed the South Vietnamese to defeat at the hands of the Communist forces by cutting off military aid even in the midst of an invasion by the North Vietnamese army. The second was in Iran, when we either would not or could not (it makes no practical difference) save the government on which the Nixon Doctrine depended in that region from being overthrown by forces hostile to the United States.

When Vietnam was abandoned, Kissinger was still in office, but his protests and pleas fell on deaf congressional ears; by the time the Shah was abandoned, Kissinger was a private citizen, and his protests were *a fortiori* of no avail. He blames Watergate, but there are reasons to believe that even without Watergate American public opinion would have opposed continued involvement in Vietnam after the withdrawal of our troops.* The case of Iran is harder to judge, but even there one wonders whether American public opinion under any President (even a Nixon undamaged by Watergate) would have countenanced the bloodletting that would have been necessary to keep the Shah in power once the revolutionary mobs had hit the streets.

IN SHORT, as a "conceptualizer" Kissinger was very brilliant but for the most part wrong. The "structure of peace" he envisioned was an illusion, based on a misconception of what was possible in the real world. Since such misconceptions are common to intellectuals—who are always in danger of getting carried away by ideas—it is tempting to blame the intellectual in Kissinger for his errors as a statesman. But if he (rather than circumstances like Watergate) is to be blamed at all, it is paradoxically the diplomat rather than the intellectual in him at which the accusing finger should be pointed.

Kissinger was so good at diplomacy, so great a virtuoso in the negotiating arts, that he may well have come to imagine that he could negotiate *anything*; and this may have led him into the mistake (which the intellectual in him could reinforce with dazzling rationalizations) of trying to negotiate the non-negotiable. Throughout these volumes, whenever a stalemated negotiation is being described, the vision of the *breakthrough* shimmers in the distance, and when it comes, the sense of achievement is so great and so vividly conveyed that the reader not only shares in it but is in danger of joining Kissinger in forgetting for the moment that in at least two major cases it ultimately turned out to be a mirage. The Paris accords that seemed to end the Vietnam war are one such case of a "breakthrough" in a conflict that could not be settled by compromise or accommodation; the 1972 agreement with the Soviet Union on the Basic Principles of Détente was another.

There is one more great conflict in the world, to which as it happens more space is devoted in *Years of Upheaval* than to any other: the Arab-Israeli conflict. Is it also non-negotiable? Certainly the essential feature of the non-negotiable conflict is there. One side seeks victory, in this instance meaning not merely the conquest or the domination but the total destruction of the other side, which for its part seeks peaceful coexistence and accommodation. For many years the Arabs were entirely open about the unlimited character of their ambitions with respect to Israel. Nasser proclaimed that he wanted to drive the Jews of Israel into the sea, and the Arab world as a whole was united in the famous three "No's" proclaimed at Khartoum in 1967: No recognition, No negotiation, No peace. So long as this "rejectionist" position held, not even the most talented negotiator—not even Henry Kissinger—could see any chance of real motion toward a settlement. But with the

* I spell out these reasons in detail in chapter 4 of *Why We Were in Vietnam*.

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rise of Sadat, and with his decision to inch his way toward a new and therefore potentially negotiable position, possibilities opened up that had not been there before; and at this point even a less perceptive diplomat than Henry Kissinger might have seen the faint glimmerings of a breakthrough at the end of a very long tunnel. Kissinger is frank to admit that he was a little slow in taking the full measure of Sadat, but once he did, there was no stopping him in pursuit of this most prized (because most elusive) breakthrough of all.

It was said at the time, and can still be maintained, that Egypt was egged on to attack Israel in 1973 by the Soviets (who thereby violated the provision in the Basic Principles of Détente calling on the two superpowers to exercise a restraining influence on third parties lest they themselves be drawn directly into the conflict). Kissinger, however, did not and does not see it that way. What he came to believe was that Sadat had launched the Yom Kippur war not because of the Soviets, and not in order to destroy Israel, but to establish the psychological precondition for making peace with Israel: the restoration of Egyptian honor. This meant that Egypt must not be subjected to a humiliating military defeat. Thus while the United States was making certain through the supply of equipment that Israel would not be defeated by a Soviet-armed opponent, and while Nixon and Kissinger were deterring a direct Soviet intervention by putting U.S. forces on alert, their policy simultaneously required that Israel be denied a decisive victory.

The policy, in effect, was to contrive a virtual draw. This would leave Egypt feeling that its honor had been restored and would therefore make dealing with the Israelis psychologically possible; it would leave the Israelis indebted to the United States for saving them from being overwhelmed; it would therefore leave the United States (as Sadat often put it) with "99 percent of the cards," and would also result in a severe diminution of Soviet power in the Middle East. For an inconclusive end to the war would demonstrate that while the United States would not permit the Arabs to win a military victory over Israel (the only kind of victory the Soviet connection could promise), only American diplomacy could help the Arabs recover territory that they had lost to the Israelis on the battlefield.

The outlines of this overall design were sufficiently clear even while the Yom Kippur war was still going on. They were discerned, for example, by such observers as Walter Laqueur and Edward N. Luttwak who, writing in collaboration in these pages,* accused Kissinger of dragging his feet in resupplying the Israelis with vital military equipment in order to make the scheme work. Others, including Kissinger himself, blamed the second echelon of the Defense Department for this delay, and I must say that my original belief in the Laqueur-Luttwak interpretation has been shaken by his account of the episode in *Years of Upheaval.*

In any event, the Yom Kippur war *was* concluded in the way the new strategy required: in the end the Israelis were saved by a heroic American resupply effort; Egyptian honor was preserved by American pressure on Israel to spare the encircled Third Army; the Soviets were squeezed out of the ensuing diplomatic play; and the United States, in the person of Henry Kissinger, became the central actor in the Middle East. The military disengagement between Israel and Egypt that Kissinger negotiated in the course of the first example of "shuttle diplomacy" the world had ever seen led ultimately to the signing of a separate peace between the two parties: a stunning breakthrough indeed which, although not arranged directly by Kissinger himself (he was out of office by then), must be considered the direct progeny of his original achievement.

As I write, the Israelis have just turned over the last part of the Sinai to Egypt. Sadat is gone and his successor Mubarak is still a relatively unknown quantity. If the peace holds, Kissinger will have been vindicated; if, however, Egypt, having used American diplomacy to get what it could not win *on the battlefield, should now return* (whether openly or covertly) to the rejectionist fold, another example will have been added to the Paris agreements on Vietnam of the terrible dangers of contriving a negotiated settlement between a party that wants peace and a party that, although it may at certain moments pretend otherwise, wants only victory.

WHATEVER happens, however, Kissinger is surely right in saying, as he often does, that the statesman works in darkness, that he is always forced to make choices not only without foreknowledge of the future but usually even without adequate knowledge of what is going on in the present. One salient virtue of these memoirs is the sense Kissinger gives us of how the process works from day to day, from hour to hour, sometimes even from minute to minute. We are drawn in, we share in the anxieties and excitements of one crisis after another, we are in suspense while we read even though we know what the outcome will be.

For myself, even when following Kissinger through the execution of a policy with which I disagree, I find it very hard to fault or blame him. What else could he have done? What better could *anyone* have done? That is the feeling I get as I read, and it is undoubtedly the feeling he wants us all to get. Yet valuable as these memoirs are, they would have been more valuable still if Kissinger—having evoked the circumstances in which he did what he did and having convinced us that

* "Kissinger and the Yom Kippur War," September 1974.

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there was probably no better alternative available at the time—had added the dimension of hindsight and commented, from the perspective of today, on where and how he nevertheless went wrong.

On the evidence of some of his recent statements, for example, he has changed his mind about détente, or at least certain features of détente (such as the effects of economic linkage), and about arms control (whether there is such a thing as strategic superiority and what can be done with it). But so busy is he here with the effort to explain and justify his earlier views that he scarcely does more than hint at the revisions time and experience have wrought in his thinking. Understandable though this is, it remains a pity. For as the foreign policy of the Reagan administration reveals, we will never recover from some of the illusions of the past until we arrive as a nation at a franker and more realistic assessment than Kissinger provides here.

For example, in defending himself against those (myself included) who have pointed out that the fate of the Shah has demonstrated that the United States cannot safely rely on surrogates to defend its interests in the Persian Gulf, Kissinger asks what alternative there was to this policy at a time when neither Congress nor American public opinion would have sanctioned the stationing of American forces in the region. But the fact that there may have been no alternative under the circumstances prevailing at the time does not mean that the policy was sound. It may well have been the best we could do, but we now know that even the best turned out to be not good enough.

This is not an academic issue: the Reagan administration is now going through the same process in its policy toward Saudi Arabia, at least partly because it does not understand what our experience with Iran teaches. And much the same can be said of the Reagan administration's policy toward the Soviet Union which—for all that the President has always been a critic of détente—looks more and more like a less and less cleverly executed version of the détente policy of the Nixon administration.

Perhaps it is too much to expect Kissinger himself, the most interested of all parties, to provide the disinterested critical assessment of the past we (and in particular the present Secretary of State, who still seems arrested in the ideas he absorbed then as Kissinger's deputy) so desperately need. On the other hand, there is no one on the face of the earth from whom such a reassessment would come with greater authority.

In the meantime, and despite this deficiency, I think it is important, and especially for one like myself who was and remains opposed to the political strategy in whose defense these memoirs were written, to emphasize that they have already earned a place among the great books of their kind and among the great works of our time.

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The Latest French Revolution

Jean-François Revel

PUBLIC opinion greeted the election of François Mitterrand to the Presidency of the French Republic on May 10, 1981, and of a Socialist majority to the National Assembly on June 21, with a degree of skepticism that was, to say the least, curious. Neither those who voted for the Socialist party (PS) nor those who voted against it thought that it would apply its program—let alone that it would carry that program through to its clear and natural conclusion, which was to put an end to the capitalist system.

This was curious because the PS, the new Socialist party that was born in 1971 (when Mitterrand joined it and assumed leadership), is a party of doctrinaires and theoreticians who have produced an abundant literature. This literature was known to the public: it includes the official program and projects as well as a voluminous quantity of books, articles, speeches—material which, while it does not carry the weight of the documents adopted by the party congresses, comes nevertheless from highly placed leaders and represents the goals of most of the party members. Among the most explicit of these, as a matter of fact, are those of Mitterrand himself. His most recent book, *Here and Now*, was published in the fall of 1980, just a few months before the elections. The author was perfectly clear here, as indeed he was in the official program of his presidential candidacy, which was elaborated and published in 1981.*

As early as 1972, in the oldest of the PS's government programs—entitled "To Change Life"—Mitterrand wrote in the preface: "While this program follows no dogma and has no official doctrine, *its principal theoretical inspiration is and remains Marxism.*"

It is worth noting that this statement nicely represents the bankrupt thinking of French socialism. The party congress adopts a program and immediately announces that it does not represent official doctrine; then what is it? The party congress states that there will be no dogmas, and in the next sentence makes an oath of allegiance to the most tyrannical of modern dogmas. Eight years later, in *Here and Now*, Mitterrand writes: "It would be strictly absurd to govern while allowing the nerve centers of our society to be occupied by the number one enemy of socialism: Big Capital."

Thus, at a time when there are no longer any Marxists, aside from a few priests; at a time when the whole world, including some Communist nations, is rediscovering free enterprise as the lesser evil; when in Italy and in Great Britain the harm of an excessively large public sector is recognized; when Felipe Gonzalez, the leader of the Spanish Socialist party (PSOE), and his economic advisers announce that they will not demand nationalization because "no system works better than the free market" (*dixit* Gonzalez)—well, it is at this very moment that the French Socialist party announces that it will pursue an archaic project, a project that needs be described as "collectivist," however much the Socialists may dislike this term. For to describe the turning over of the means of production to the state in the name of the collectivity (the general public) by any other term would require that the dictionaries be revised.

This mass of PS doctrine, so thick that it resembles a mixture of treatises on theology and novels of chivalry, is indeed dominated by Marxist thought. Its analyses and its political and economic propositions all designate capitalism—private ownership of the means of production—and the market system as the radical evils that explain all problems and all human sufferings. To be sure, all manner of ritualistic qualifications are brought to bear upon this judgment in order to save the PS from being labeled "bureaucratic" or "collectivistic," qualities that have been discredited by the failures of Soviet-style socialism. Hence the verbal hanky-panky, a game at which French Socialists are very adept: you learn from their documents how it will be possible to carry out nationalizations without statist authoritarianism, or how to remove the most dynamic businesses from the private sector without increasing the role of the state bureaucracy.

JEAN-FRANÇOIS REVEL, the distinguished French political theorist, is the author of, among other books, *The Totalitarian Temptation* and *Without Marx or Jesus*. The present essay is drawn from his new book, *La Grâce de l'Etat*, which he translates as "The Megalomaniacal State," and which headed the French best-seller list for four months. The translation is by ROGER KAPLAN.

* Since this was written, the second volume of Mitterrand's *Politique* has appeared in France.—ED.

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But these are campaign-rally acrobatics. The truth is that the social-democratic current within the PS has been in the minority for ten years and it has been defeated consistently in the party's internal debates. If the essence of social democracy is leaving economic initiative to the private sector while granting to the state the job of redistributing national income and enhancing social welfare, the French PS is not social-democratic. Criticizing the most famous model of social democracy—Sweden—Mitterrand writes: "Sweden is insufficiently socialistic, for despite an unparalleled redistribution of income among social groups, it has not struck capitalism a mortal blow, in the heart of its power: the ownership of the major means of production."

This principled position is in conformity with the most orthodox Marxism. It has been reaffirmed thousands of times in all the writings of the French Socialist party over the past decade. To repeat an expression dear to the authors of these writings, it brings one to a "strategy of rupture" with capitalism. The aim of this position is to turn over to the public power—that is, to the political power—all, or at least most, of the opportunities for taking economic initiatives.

Nevertheless, very few people in France or anywhere else believed that the Socialists, once in office, would apply their program in a literal way. In fact, during the long years of opposition it was considered almost a sign of bad faith to quote from their most categorical texts. They became consummate artists at deriding criticisms based on references to their own writings; they drowned these in a stream of rhetoric and irony, presenting their proposed reforms as ordinary and prudent improvements for which there were many reassuring precedents. To conquer the votes of the Center without losing those of the extreme Left, they said every other day that while their lips rendered unto revolutionary socialism the ancestral devotions, their hearts yearned secretly for social democracy. Therefore, even those who had not desired their victory believed it signaled the arrival of a moderate sort of leftist reform movement.

It was, then, with stunned disbelief that partisans and opponents alike watched the new government, without losing any time, enact a whole series of laws that will transform the French economic system and will inaugurate a radical change in French society as a whole. Only a month after the National Assembly elections, the Prime Minister presented his program; its most important section asks for the largest series of nationalizations ever proposed at one time in a liberal economy. Added to the economic sectors already nationalized in the past, the new ones will give France the most extensive public sector in the non-Communist industrialized world.

It should be remembered that haste has always been prescribed as a necessary condition of social transformation. To delay change permits revolutionary enthusiasm to wane and gives the opposition time to get organized. Yet during the campaign even Mitterrand had said—every other day—that he would spread structural reforms over several years, at a slow, progressive pace. The Prime Minister, Pierre Mauroy, enjoyed a reputation as a prudent social democrat. As a result, the shock—the feeling of being overwhelmed, the sense that a change of regimes, as opposed to a mere change of government, was taking place—came all the more rudely.

In a legal sense, the expression "change of regimes" does not apply to what amounted to a replacement of the party in power. Nevertheless, François Mitterrand's aim is not just to carry French history into a "new era," but into an authentic renaissance. This quasi-mystical ambition has to be understood in order to see that objections based on economic realities will carry little weight with the Socialists, who come close to seeing in these realities elaborate plots organized by "Big Capital."

Indeed, the discussion of technical economic issues interests French Socialists very little. What they are driven by is moral ambition: they want to create a new man in a new society. The president of the National Assembly that was elected in June, Louis Mermaz, one of François Mitterrand's oldest political associates, declared before a group of journalists a few days after taking up his new post: "The Socialist deputies . . . do not necessarily believe in the eternal and intangible rules of economics. In my view, they must believe there are economic rules for capitalists and economic rules for socialists which are completely antagonistic, which is why debates on economic issues always reach a dead end. One always gets the impression that there are speakers using two different languages: Greek and Chinese. In reality, it is a question of two value systems and two entirely different kinds of economic rules." And he added: "I believe in the phenomenon of rupture."

While disapproving of Communist totalitarian methods, the French Socialists have a philosophy of history and an analysis of contemporary society that do not differ markedly from those held by the Communists. The ideas of the Socialists have been expressed very widely in writings that represent their deepest thinking and that are not merely verbal concessions to their electoral alliance with the Communists, as many thought for a long time. The official program of Mitterrand's candidacy, the "110 Propositions" published in January 1981, laid out once again the unchanging foundations of these ideas. The world view that dominates here is clear: capitalism is intrinsically bad; the search for profits causes inflation and unemployment; "Big Capital"—with the multinationals at its head—is the sole cause of misery in the Third World and

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the children dying of hunger there. Society must be rendered moral by eliminating the profit motive.

THE best example of how this thinking works in practice is the Mitterrand government's decision to nationalize all private banks. There is no convincing economic argument for the nationalization of the private banks; this scheme rests upon the ideal, common to both Christianity and Islam in the Middle Ages, of creating a *profitless financial market.*

In September 1981, a member of the government suggested that what was needed was a "cultural revolution" in the banks. The French experience is original in that it offers the spectacle of a cultural revolution directed from the top in the context of an advanced industrial society—moreover, a rich society, where per-capita purchasing power is among the five or six highest in the world and where it continued to expand even after the onset of the energy crisis in 1973. Will France maintain this position? For the new rulers, that is not the issue. Mitterrand's objective is not primarily economic. It is above all to build the good society, as he sees it—to reform man, avenge the poor, punish the rich (or at least riches). France has abandoned itself, quite legally, to a kind of lay puritanism, moderate in its first steps but extreme in its ultimate objectives. If the announced metamorphosis is carried through, France will cross the border separating market economies from those controlled, directly or indirectly, by the state.

This is the essential fact, and evidently it was no more clearly understood by most political and economic leaders, in France and elsewhere, than by most analysts and editorialists, to judge from the reassuring reception they accorded the vast program of nationalizations set forth by Mitterrand and the National Assembly as early as July 1981.

Some note that, anyway, the French state has always intervened in economic affairs, and to do so a little more or a little less will not change much. Others stress that the key factor, in a business, is whether it is well or poorly managed, not whether it is private or public: Renault, say these people, Volkswagen, Lufthansa are nationalized enterprises that are competitive. The individuals and chief executives who for a third of a century have been clients of those French banks which were nationalized in 1945 see no difference between the services of the nationalized and of the privately-held banks.

There is something to such observations. But they would be more effective if they took into account the fact that statist intervention is partly responsible for France's late start in industrialization. They also avoid dealing with the fact that the same criteria for "profitability" are not applied to nationalized industries as to the others. But especially, and once again, they miss the essential point: what is the philosophy behind a nationalization?

A nationalization may be technical or ideological. It may be brought about by circumstances, it may be aimed at solving a specific problem, it may alter the status of a given enterprise by defining it as a public service. It does not, in any such instance, call into question the fundamental nature of the market economy of which the nationalized enterprise remains a part (as in the examples of Renault, Volkswagen, and Lufthansa). On the other side, nationalization—and all the more so a whole series of them—can be conceived as a way of attaining a political objective whose real significance is to remove economic initiative from the private sector in order to concentrate both kinds of power, economic and political, in a single decision-making center. It is beyond question that the French Socialists desire the second type of nationalization.

Moreover, their aim in the banking sector is not simply to complete the nationalization program undertaken in 1945, but to change its purpose. Above and beyond nationalizing what is still private in French banking, they want to make the previously nationalized banks function differently, for these, in their view, are excessively committed to free competition. As *Le Monde*'s F. Renard has written: "The private sector, holding 13 percent of all [banking] resources and responsible for 16 percent of the economy's credit, is, according to the Left, guilty of a mortal sin: its existence justifies the behavior of the big banks nationalized in 1945, which are thought too 'commercial' and in need of being 'renationalized.' "

The goal is to set up a central system for the allocation of the country's financial resources. In these circumstances, the official slogan, according to which "nationalization is not statism," rings like word play, and its purpose is to mask the contradiction between the system being put into place and the declared commitment to economic pluralism and decentralization.

Until 1981, over 75 percent of credit was controlled by nationalized banks and state-directed savings-and-loan associations. The private banks and financial establishments were thus far from having a monopoly. They were not a public service. Their situation was sound and did not require a rescue operation by the state.

But from the perspective of the PS, the problem was that even though private banks represented a minority of the banking sector, their simple existence gave an open and competitive aspect to the French financial market. The big banks and the savings-and-loan associations competed with one another and with the private sector. The market worked.

The nationalization of what was still independent of the public sector will have the effect of radically modifying the system. It will turn over

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to the public authorities nearly total economic power, because to have a monopoly on savings and on the allocation of financial resources is to have the ultimate political weapon. Through its control of credit, the state will control indirectly even those firms that are still privately held. If the Socialists were not interested in transforming the banking sector into a political tool, there would be no reason for them to replace the banks' shareholders with the state.

All the more so since the social goals of these nationalizations are no clearer than are the economic ones. As Paul Fabra wrote in *Le Monde*, taking over the banking sector in order to reduce inflation is the equivalent of believing in wolves who disguise themselves as grandmothers. "The argument," said Fabra, "would have some merit only if in the past private banks had been observed to apply regulations less rigorously than the three giants nationalized in 1945. Such is not the case."

ONE is forced back to the prior conclusion. Since the state already exerted sufficient control over the banking and financial sectors to oblige them to follow policies that it considered to be in the public interest, the nationalizations have no practical economic purpose. They must therefore fit into a large moral and political design.

To understand this design—since even the government's friends in the press cannot discern the economic value of the reform of the banks—one must ponder the dread of mortal sin and the thirst for purification haunting the Socialist soul. The motives given by the Socialists, which include stimulating growth, increasing productivity, reducing unemployment, lowering inflation, and even—surely the funniest—preventing the banks from competing with the state by "creating currency," are good at the most as rainy Sunday diversions for fairly well-informed observers of the true realities of the economic scene.

These fantasies demonstrate once again that there is no technical competence that cannot be sacrificed on the altar of faith. The new Cathars believe the banks are impure. The private banks, still under the mark of original sin, must be baptized. The nationalized banks, corrupted by contacts with pagans, must be rebaptized. After the ceremony, decked out in candid probity and white linen, the baptists and anabaptists will be worthy of receiving daily communion.

So far as the economy in general is concerned, the new French leaders plan to embark on a new road, neither capitalist management complemented by welfare statism or social democracy, nor totalitarian socialism on the Soviet model. This is a tough experiment, even self-contradictory at first sight, since it consists of enlarging the public sector, and therefore the state's role, while simultaneously reducing the role of the state. In effect, the French government wants to deprivatize the economy, in order to escape from "the logic of capitalism," all the while avoiding the sandtrap of a *dirigiste* (directed) economy run by bureaucrats.

The Socialist party prides itself on promoting, in all its programs, both socialism and self-rule. Thus, the government had the National Assembly pass a massive series of nationalizations and simultaneously a law reversing the old French tendency toward political and administrative centralization. This is a law which can scarcely fail to please all those who, for many years, have called for the revival of local democracy in France. The growth of central power in Paris has been supported by Left and Right, monarchy and republic. Tocqueville, as is known, was struck by the vitality of local democracy in America, in contrast with the Old Continent. One must therefore give credit to a government which has had the courage to do what others only talked about doing for a century.

BUT how does one reconcile this decentralization with the narrowing of private economic initiative and the consequent growth of state intervention in the economy? The contradiction between the two policies is only apparent. In fact, Mitterrand's ruling idea in both cases is to push back the power of capitalism, to suppress the "private ownership of the major means of production and exchange." It matters little whether the powers taken from the capitalists are transferred to the central government or to various regional authorities. What matters is that they be transferred to a *political* power, central or local.

Complementing this transfer will be an increase in the power of unions. There would be nothing extraordinary in this, were it not for the fact that French unions represent a small minority of the workforce: between 15 and 20 percent. Thus, the union representatives will have enhanced power but they will not be speaking for the majority of their co-workers in a given enterprise: in fact, they will follow the orders of their national leadership. In the case of one major union, the CGT, the orders will be those of the Communist party.

German-style *Mitbestimmung* (co-determination) is not possible, nor for that matter is it desirable, when out of three unions one (the CGT) is an arm of the Communist party, and another (the syndicalist CFDT) believes that workers should take over the means of production ("self-management"). In Germany with *Mitbestimmung*, or again with the management-employee consultations which are the practice in Japan, it is understood that workers and management have a common interest in the success of the enterprise. But the dominant ideology, in French syndicalism as in the PS, and naturally in the Communist party,

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heaves this solution into the hell of "class collaboration." The final goal of true socialism is not to share power with the owners but to eliminate them.

This is why the new government, still needing the help of management, let it be known that it would postpone the workers' right of veto in matters of hiring and firing, a right the Socialist party program called for. In any event, this reform would affect only small- and medium-sized enterprises, since the more important ones are supposed to be placed under the direct or indirect control of the state and the unions.

In short, the French Socialist plan in its entirety is coherent. All its elements aim at placing the major levers of economic decision-making in the hands of the public authorities and the unions.

IN THE past ten years we have witnessed the collapse of the last illusions about the Communist world. Its totalitarian essence, incompatible with all hope of liberty and human dignity, is recognized now for what it is by an international opinion that is no longer intimidated by the terrorism of impostors; and whatever illusions one could entertain about its economic efficiency have been swept away as well. Only a handful of agents and lunatics believe that Communist systems can build viable economies. Even equality in misery is not guaranteed, since Communist societies, as is now known only too well, are among the most unequal in the world.

Still, in France and perhaps in other industrial countries (the Third World is something else again, for understandable reasons), there is a middle layer of political leaders, trade unionists, and intellectuals whose faith in "real socialism" has not been shaken by these facts. They cling to the doctrine coined by Arthur Koestler in *The Yogi and the Commissar*: the "doctrine of unshakable foundations." That is, they concede the failure of the Communist model, which is progress of a sort, but they view it as a morbid accident which does not discredit the basic principle of socialism. For them, the failure of Soviet socialism and the failure of capitalism can be placed on exactly the same level, and they reject them both equally, with this difference: of the two, it is only capitalism whose failures cause them to reject it *in principle*, even though capitalism's failures seem so much less serious than the calamities of socialism.

As for Mitterrand himself, it is obvious, from all he says, writes, and does, that he shares this view. He seems convinced of the intrinsic and essential superiority of socialism to capitalism; and he means socialism, not social democracy or the welfare state. Therefore, it is to be feared that, if he has to make a choice, one day, in domestic affairs, between radicalization and compromise, his choice will very likely be radicalization.

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My Life as a Christian

Gerald S. Strober

ON A spring afternoon in 1955, having finished classes for the day, I was waiting for a friend outside the main entrance of Brooklyn College. As I looked up Bedford Avenue, a man approached and offered me a copy of the New Testament. To this day I am not certain why I took the small book. I was not especially interested in religion. I knew little about Judaism beyond the rudimentary training one receives for Bar Mitzvah. My knowledge of Christianity was limited to observing the casual Catholicism of my Italian friends. I had one Protestant acquaintance, but the rest of that world existed far outside my New York City environment.

That night I read the little volume in its entirety. The book's historical and theological implications were beyond my comprehension, but I came away fascinated by the person of Jesus. I suppose each of us can point to a single instant when a decisive event occurs that changes our direction: today the fashionable word for the experience of encounter with Jesus is epiphany, in my day it would have been characterized as a moment of truth. In any case, from that evening until my return to Judaism in 1974 I would belong to the previously unknown Christian Lord. He would become the focus of my life and with the congregation of the faithful I would sing, "Hallelujah, Jesus is mine."

Three years later, having in the meantime completed a stint in the army, I went to Chicago to enroll in the summer session of the Moody Bible Institute, the self-proclaimed "West Point of Christian Service."

My army service had taken me to Germany and France, yet the trip to Chicago was the most exciting of my life. For the first time I was filled with a sense of purpose; the train taking me west seemed an engine of destiny. After years of drifting I was finally embarked on a real journey. I would now begin to catch up with all of my friends from Brooklyn who had graduated from college and were already launched on careers. On another level, the prospect of seeing Chicago was a fulfillment of sorts. In my teenage years, I had been an avid fan of James T. Farrell, and while I would have been hard put to reconcile the life presented in the *Studs Lonigan* trilogy and the Danny O'Neill novels with my religious fervor, I keenly looked forward to visiting the South Side neighborhood so familiar from my reading. As the train moved through the night between Buffalo and Cleveland, I determined to visit 58th and Indiana and Cottage Grove Avenue as soon as I settled into life at Moody.

In the morning, at first light, the train passed the massive steel mills of Gary, Indiana and soon we began to run parallel with commuter trains moving through Englewood toward the Loop. La Salle Street Station was crowded with people rushing to make connections at the three other major Chicago terminals. I walked past the information board and noted the destination of trains heading west: Omaha, Minneapolis, Denver, Los Angeles. I felt in touch with America. True, I was only 900-odd miles from New York, but the psychological distance was enormous. I was at a new and decisive beginning; Chicago would provide the framework for my developing spiritual quest. As I walked out of the station I was convinced I was moving toward the center of God's will.

The cab ride to Moody was brief, a straight run north on La Salle. At 9:30, with a June sun poking through the overcast and the sickly sweet smell of the stockyards filling the air, I entered Moody Bible Institute. The registrar's staff was quietly efficient, and in no time I was given a class schedule (Bible Synthesis, Cults, New Testament Introduction), a room assignment, and a copy of the Students' Manual, a compendium of the rules of conduct that governed all waking life at the Institute. The atmosphere in the spacious office complex was sanctified without being sanctimonious, and the administrative officials made careful and reasoned suggestions. The scene was a far cry from the bedlam of registration at the Brooklyn College gymnasium, and light years away from the chaos of an army orientation center.

Later that day I would meet the students who had gathered for the summer session. They were a heterogeneous group in terms of age, sex, and geographic and social background, but it was all homogeneity in matters spiritual. I was somewhat

GERALD S. STROBER, here making his first appearance in COMMENTARY, is the author of several books, including *American Jews: Community in Crisis* (1974) and *Graham: A Day in Billy's Life* (1976).

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older than most, a situation that would obtain to an even greater degree during the regular academic year when the Institute was crowded with recent high-school graduates. One other thing: in a student body of a thousand, I was the only Jew.

The summer session attracted an interesting admixture, transfers from other Bible Institutes and Christian colleges, missionaries on leave from the foreign field, church workers seeking more technical education, and married couples combining a vacation with a smattering of classroom activity. My roommates in the large room we shared in an Institute-owned building on Wells Street were two brothers from Iowa, who were here to take introductory courses before beginning their study at nearby Wheaton College. These fellows were quite conscientious, and were most considerate of my desire to spend long hours in study.

I had determined not to repeat my nondescript career at Brooklyn College. Moody represented a fresh start, and I was aiming to make my mark both academically and spiritually. I also felt sure that Moody would provide the answers to the increasing doubts and questions I encountered as I became more immersed in Scripture. I did not question my basic faith; that was secure. I had experienced personal salvation and this singular and comforting fact could not be altered. Yet I wondered how far one could go in believing every verse of the Bible.

My early instructors in the Christian faith—Reverend Lockerbee of the Bay Ridge Baptist Church, the staff of an evangelical group known as the Navigators who worked near army bases all over the world, and Billy Graham through his radio sermons and books—assured me that the Bible was inerrant, without one flaw and totally trustworthy. The fundamentalist world in those days (and to a large degree today as well) accepted a kind of scriptural domino theory. The reliability of the Bible depended on all being true; one error, even in the most innocuous passage, could bring the whole house of faith tumbling down. At Moody, as throughout the fundamentalist community, the Bible was treated with a special reverence. One did not drop a Bible without considerable embarrassment. It was as if faith itself were contained within the leather covers that bordered the printed page.

IN MANY classes at Moody, the Bible was the main or only textbook, and in all others it was the major influence upon the manner in which a particular subject was treated. All of the ideas, philosophies, conjectures of the ages were examined in the light of Scripture, and most were found wanting. In a world shot through with tentativeness and ambivalence, the Bible offered stability, an anchor—answers in a society where there seemed only to be questions. The Moody students would teach their Sunday School youngsters the old ditty: "The B-i-b-l-e that's the Book for me, I stand alone on the word of God, the B-i-b-l-e." The sentiment expressed in this simple verse summed up the Institute's philosophy of education.

At Moody, as at the other Bible schools, it was not just any Bible but the Scofield Reference edition that was standard issue. The Scofield Bible articulated the basic tenets of modern fundamentalism. What differentiated this Bible from the numerous other editions in use in churches were the notes prepared by Reverend C.I. Scofield and a panel of distinguished biblical scholars. The Scofield Reference Bible based itself on a verse in Paul's second letter to his young disciple Timothy: "Study to show thyself approved, a workman who need not be ashamed, rightly *dividing* the word of truth." Scofield and the fundamentalist movement of the early 20th century understood this passage to mean that God had divided all history into periods of time or dispensations, beginning with creation and ending with eternity.

According to this scheme, the current dispensation is the age of grace, when God calls as many souls as possible to salvation through Christ. These saved individuals form the body of Christ that will be raptured when Jesus returns. This event is described by Paul in his first letter to the Thessalonians:

> The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout with the voice of the archangel and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

The Bible school movement, of which Moody was the leading institution, was built upon dispensational theology. Dispensationalism captured the imagination of the faithful who longed for the return of Christ and a release from the difficulties of trying to walk with God in a sinful and unfriendly world. The fundamentalist was to be in this world but not of it; he was to live as a stranger and pilgrim, threading ever so carefully among the temptations and offerings of a hostile environment. He was to seek the city that had foundations, whose builder and maker was God.

Thus at Moody one lived in an atmosphere charged with spiritual expectancy. Jesus was coming, and could in the next moment appear in the heavens to bring the believers home. But the fundamentalist student also lived in constant tension. On the one hand, he was making a huge investment of time, to prepare for a lifetime of service. He was enjoined to continue faithful to his calling, to run the race without failing, for, having once put his hand to the plough, he could not look back. On the other hand, why should long hours be given over to study when the imminent return of Jesus might make all such activity superfluous? Indeed, the time spent in classwork and

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assignments might be better utilized actually winning souls to Christ.

Many students attempted to resolve the problem by using every spare moment to evangelize and "witness." Each student was required to perform two outside assignments a week, usually teaching a Sunday School class or participating in a rescue mission or church service. Many went beyond this by distributing tracts at busy intersections, holding impromptu street meetings, and engaging in home visitations in the area adjacent to the Institute. These activities were supplemented by a continuing round of prayer meetings where supplications were offered for various parts of the globe, as well as for specific ethnic and racial groups and fellow students.

ALREADY on my first day I could sense that something important was happening at 820 North La Salle Street. The Institute was filled with people manifesting a sense of purpose and mission. It was as if the Institute family had some very significant information denied to the remainder of the outside world. The Moody person knew where he was going and, what is more, also understood where the society around him was headed. The Loop, with its skyscrapers, offices, and frenzied commercial pace, the nearby North Side and its expensive apartment buildings and fashionable shops, the great museums, galleries, and libraries within walking distance of the Institute, might appear to reflect the accomplishments and glorious civilization of mid-20th-century man, but the Moody person knew all of this would one day fade, and only the Kingdom of God remain.

Riches, renown, the material and intellectual treasures of this world were of only temporary import. The wise man stored up his valuables in service to God and the building of His Kingdom. The point was hammered home constantly: one must choose between God and Mammon. One could not serve two masters.

The making of choices extended also to personal comportment. The Moody student was enjoined to be circumspect in dress and manner. One must strive not to give offense, to live a life commensurate with the gift of salvation. In his letter to the Romans, Paul had challenged the believer to present his body a living sacrifice unto God, and this, the apostle declared, was a "reasonable" service. The Moody student was subject to the same temptations experienced by young people outside the spiritual circle, but he, unlike them, had to withstand the evil one.

This was particularly germane to those preparing for a lifetime of ministry. The lessons of self-control and prudence had to be learned at the beginning of one's service; otherwise, the individual might wind up in that most unenviable position of having preached but himself become a castaway.

On my first night at Moody, I carefully studied the student handbook, a document which promised to be more difficult than the classwork that lay ahead. The handbook detailed every aspect of the student's existence. This included attendance at an early morning prayer session, daily chapel, an evening prayer band, the "practical work assignments" I have mentioned, study hours, and finally, to bed at 10:30 (11:00 on Friday and Saturday). Movies, the theater, and similar amusements were forbidden. Dating was permitted but within the framework of a series of directives regulating whom one could date, where the couple could go, and how far apart they would have to sit if riding in an automobile. The Institute's rules even extended to the use of popcorn makers, outlawed in the dorms for fear of fire. The Moody student might have had things easier than, say, a novitiate at a Benedictine monastery, but he was constantly aware of living under strict discipline.

I did not really mind the code of conduct. I had just spent two years in the army and a good part of that time in a combat-ready unit in Germany, where furloughs were almost unknown and a twenty-four-hour pass an oddity. I was so determined to succeed in the academic sphere that there was little time to fret over the lack of social freedom. The only unhappiness I experienced that summer was a self-imposed prohibition on attending Cubs games. As a lifelong, at times fanatical, baseball fan, I had for years dreamed of visiting the various major league parks, and Wrigley Field, the home of the Cubs, was just a fifteen-minute subway ride away.

The problem was that the games were in the afternoon, a period when I felt obliged to study and prepare for the next day's classwork. I had other activities to engage me during the evenings. Soon after dinner I would walk the two blocks over to Clark Street and Chicago Avenue. There, a few yards down on Clark, was a small rescue mission. The mission served the down-and-out population of the near North Side. This storefront refuge from the ravages of the saloons that filled Clark Street was strictly small-time. The important missions were located on West Madison Street in the heart of the flophouse district. There, thousands of men aimlessly walked the streets day and night in all seasons and weather conditions. This was an area I visited on Sunday afternoons, when the West Madison denizens felt a particular sadness and a longing for home and family.

ON THOSE Chicago summer Sundays, I learned many lessons about estrangement. I also discovered that a good number of the men who roamed the street were not bums sent over from central casting. Some had been professional men, others had been successful in business or trade. I also found out that a fair number of the men could return to their former lives almost at will, but preferred the anonymity and perhaps

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the danger of skid row. I met many individuals who were escaping some unbearable reality. I was certain that a significant proportion of the "bums" could give up their drinking but it provided too comforting a blanket.

The Moody students who worked West Madison offered literature, prayer, and, most of all, someone with whom to communicate. We would spend hours listening to the stories the men told of former lives and present troubles. Some of the tales were quite fantastic. One man claimed he had killed someone the year before and proceeded to instruct me on how to find the pistol used in the murder. As the man told his story I felt somewhat like a priest in the confessional. For days afterward I wondered whether I should report the incident to the police. I marshaled convincing arguments on both sides of the issue. In the end I remained silent, perhaps because I thought the police would think me daft for taking seriously the story of a resident of skid row.

One interesting aspect of street life on West Madison was the almost total lack of racial segregation. Chicago in the late 1950's was not exactly an integrated city. Even the Institute, a center representing a movement which by definition knew no distinctions of class or race, was basically white and middle class. In the academic year of 1958, only 10 students out of a total of 1,000 were black, and 7 of these came from Africa. Skid row was different. White and black sat together on sidewalks and rescue-mission benches and slept next to each other in the gutter or in cheap hotels. The single common denominator of the street, the whiskey bottle, was passed from white hand to black without hesitation. One had to be struck by the absence of conscious racial prejudice on West Madison. The men seemed to be saying something profound about human community in difficulty. But the Moody students were too absorbed in their project of winning the men to Christ to learn what the street had to teach them.

The Clark Street mission attracted the derelicts who were not tough or experienced enough to survive on West Madison, and the services were also much less elaborate. The Clark Street Sunshine Mission offered battered camp chairs, an aging piano, and a small dining area which served even smaller meals. In the bigger missions Moody students acted as acolytes to suburban church groups, but at the Sunshine Mission the Moody kids were in control. This usually meant that however skimpy and simple the food, the quality of the spiritual portion of the evening was frequently rather high. The Sunshine Mission was a test track for sermons, musical renditions, and worship innovations of every kind. The Moody students never took lightly any service at the Sunshine. The little spare auditorium, with its poor lighting and shabby atmosphere, was transformed into a cathedral. I am convinced that not a few lives were changed there, both in the pews and on the platform.

My normal role was that of a shill. I would stand outside the entrance exhorting stragglers to come in to the meeting. Most street people would refuse the invitation. It was especially difficult to lure them in during the warm-weather months. The street held too many attractions, and then again, once inside the storefront one could not panhandle for the price of a drink or bottle of cheap wine. (In 1958 fifty cents bought a pint of wine or a shot of whiskey with a beer chaser.) I would never give a person money, but instead offer to buy him a meal at the corner cafeteria.

It was much easier to fill the mission when the freezing wind blew in off Lake Michigan. I recall one especially cold night when the mission was packed with half-frozen men. The Moody senior leading the service mercifully cut his sermon from the standard three points prescribed by our course in homiletics to one. By contrast, I also recall a blizzardy evening at the West Side Rescue Mission, when an amateur preacher from Oak Park went on for an hour and a half, screaming at his audience and calling the men liars, cheats, and vile sinners. After about an hour the poor wretches began to murmur, and it seemed that an insurrection might be launched. Finally the mission superintendent, a former alcoholic who identified strongly with his guests, intervened and gave the men their soup.

The summer course I liked best was a survey of cults. Those were the days before Hare Krishna, the Moonies, and Scientology. We examined Mormonism, Christian Science ("not Christian and not science"), Jehovah's Witnesses, and Seventh Day Adventists. Our teacher, Frank Curry, was informed and very enthusiastic. We were given a careful grounding in the basic doctrines of the "cults" and armed with arguments to confound their devotees. We were also encouraged to visit the cults' religious services so as to "witness" to their followers. One Sunday I went to a Jehovah's Witness Kingdom Hall on the South Side, where I was immediately struck by the fact that the congregation was integrated. After the service I went up to the first person leaving the hall and asked the standard initial question, "Are you saved?" The Witness, a middle-aged woman, was rather taken aback. She asked who I was and what business I had disturbing the congregation. I was put on the defensive and stammered some inept reply that only intensified the woman's scorn. I beat a hasty retreat and headed off in the direction of Washington Park.

There, near the lagoon that figures so prominently in the romantic adventures of Farrell's Studs Lonigan, I encountered a Roman Catholic priest out for a Sunday stroll. I gathered up my remaining courage and handed the gentleman a tract. The priest looked through me, and without actual-

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ly speaking told me to get lost. This incident left me terribly discouraged. I wondered if I would ever successfully tell someone about Christ. I might chalk up fine grades in the classroom, but if I could not put all that knowledge into practice, it was for naught. I went back to my room and passed hours in Bible reading and prayer.

The following week I worked the streets near the Institute proffering gospel portions and tracts at a feverish pace. If a person accepted the material I would attempt to initiate a conversation. Soon I developed confidence and within a short time became an aggressive street worker. I also discovered that people in rundown neighborhoods were more apt to be polite and responsive than persons in the Loop or on the Gold Coast. Children were particularly kind, and often I would share with them the so-called wordless book. This was a device by which the worker would show the child a small blank book and then tell a simple gospel story while turning the pages.

At Moody the call to witness came not only from Scripture but also from the Practical Christian Work Department. The director, Mr. Harrison, would exhort students to take every opportunity to bring others the gospel. Each week the student was required to complete a form that listed the number of persons met, the number of those saved, and the total number of tracts, gospels, and Bibles distributed. Some students, in their rush to pile up impressive numbers, would take piles of tracts from Mr. Harrison's shelves and blanket the neighborhood adjacent to the Institute. On many evenings two inches of paper littered the street in front of the main entrance. I and others entertained doubts about the efficacy of these little booklets, but every time someone voiced an opinion on the subject an instructor would cite an obscure case where an individual was saved through reading a tract. In one far-fetched story, a tract stowed in a bottle made its way across the Pacific to bring a soldier on Guam to Christ. We were also told of the Philadelphia evangelist who would throw tracts from the top windows of downtown office buildings. Workers who set store by these little treatises sometimess rolled the documents in cellophane and threw them out of cars and buses. These "gospel bombs" peppered many a crowd, and there was always some tale of how one of the missiles led a lost soul to the Lord.

AT THE end of the summer session I flew back to New York. I spent three weeks at home, but my mind and heart were back at the Institute. I had brought home hundreds of tracts for distribution. One Monday, I loaded a briefcase with the literature and headed for the Times Square subway station. Once there I soon discovered that New Yorkers were not as friendly as Chicagoans. Some were downright antagonistic. One man almost tossed me off the platform and several others made nasty remarks. I kept smiling and remained at the station until the briefcase was emptied.

Late in the afternoon I walked through the Times Square area, then just beginning to go seedy and grim. I remembered high-school days when, along with a few friends, I would skip classes to take in a Forty-Second Street movie. After the movie we would go to Romeo's on Forty-Seventh Street, where a dollar bought a good spaghetti dinner, and then move next door to the Mayflower for a frosted doughnut. A day like this was considered an adventure.

Those days seemed very distant as I walked past Romeo's on that summer afternoon. Life had become so much more complicated, if so much more interesting. The eight weeks at Moody had confirmed my desire to enter some form of fulltime church employment. One possibility was working with servicemen as a member of the Navigators. I had spent many pleasant hours at the Navigator base in Wiesbaden and at the organization's retreat house at Bitburg outside Trier, and the prospect of becoming part of their worldwide operation was an appealing one.

As a consequence of my background I also had a special interest in Jewish missionary activity. When the regular school term began, I enrolled in the Jewish Missions major. One of my practical work assignments was as director of a youth group at the First Hebrew Christian Church on Lawrence Avenue. This congregation, funded by Presbyterians, was located in the heart of a lower-middle-class Jewish neighborhood. Every Friday after dinner I would take the El to the Lawrence Avenue station and walk over to the church. There about twenty boys would gather for basketball, crafts, and the inevitable Bible lesson. I would use the occasion to put into practice skills learned in the classroom for presenting the gospel to Jewish youngsters.

The director of the Jewish Missions program, Dr. Nathan Stone, was English, and from an Orthodox home. Dr. Stone was a careful scholar and a gentleman. At Moody he was respected for his considerable learning and oratorical abilities, yet I always felt he was a lonely person. He did not appear to be part of the Institute establishment. As the academic year wore on I understood that Stone had long ago undergone the crisis of being a hyphenated person, a "Jewish-Christian," and had somehow made his peace with the situation. It was, however, an uneasy peace. Dr. Stone could at times be very loving and considerate of his students, and could also manifest a deep concern for the Jewish people. But at other moments he would express great impatience with the Jewish community over its refusal to accept Jesus as the messiah.

The Jewish Missions course was rather outdated. One requirement was instruction in Yiddish, as if most American Jews still spoke that language. We were also taught a version of Jewish history that

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neglected the contributions of modern scholarship. The Holocaust and the creation of the state of Israel, subjects of overwhelming importance to Jews, were hardly discussed. The European Jewish tragedy was summed up as another piece of evidence of the suffering brought on by Jewish rejection of Jesus. A lesser theological argument suggested that the slaughtered Jews were somehow guilty before God for their sins. Years after I left Moody I would be astonished to discover that some Orthodox Jews also explained the Holocaust in those terms.

I soon realized the Jewish Missions course was not working out for me. The class work was not very stimulating and I was having difficulty with the argument concerning Jewish acceptance of Jesus as the messiah. The argument began with Isaiah 53. This passage describes the sufferings of a servant of God. To fundamentalists, Isaiah is here foretelling the death of Jesus of Nazareth. According to this reading, the servant of Isaiah 53 is wounded for man's transgressions and bruised for his iniquities. Led as a lamb to the slaughter, the servant suffers in order that mankind may be healed. The evangelistic argument aimed at the Jews also included Psalm 22, a passage that could be describing the act of crucifixion; Isaiah 7, with its famous "reference" to virgin birth; and other sections and verses of the Hebrew Scripture that appear to foretell events in the life of Jesus.

The evangelical case directed toward the conversion of Jews is perhaps the quintessential example of the proof-text method. Five to fifteen verses of Scripture are strung together to form what the worker believes is an irrefutable presentation. At Moody, the proof-text method was raised to an almost divine apogee. There were few students, even among the less intellectually gifted, who could not reel off several verses to marshal, support, or counter a theological argument. The virgin birth, the resurrection, the sinful nature of man, heaven, hell, the devil, and the trinity were all susceptible of "explanation" in several verses or less. And it was precisely this method with which I was becoming uneasy.

MY DISCOMFORT with the proof-text method as a means of cogently presenting the necessity for Jewish conversion to Christianity was accompanied by a growing disenchantment with the total Moody approach. Just at the moment that I was finally developing intellectual curiosity, the Moody system acted to inhibit growth. My teachers quite generally refused to answer tough questions concerning biblical historicity and accuracy. They chose instead to hide within the cloak of faith. All that mattered, they claimed, was belief that Jesus was the Christ.

The instructors did not perceive that this answer would not satisfy one who had taken the difficult path from Jewish origins to Christianity. I simply had to *know* that what I believed could be supported with fact. I did not need my faith to be proved, but I did require verification and reliability from the documents upon which my faith was based.

By year's end, not even a change to the Pastor's course and my success in the classroom could prevent the first cracks from appearing in my wall of faith. The next academic term found me at Gordon College, an evangelical liberal-arts institution with a reputation for careful scholarship. And so, inexorably, there began a fifteen-year struggle to understand my Jewishness and my relation to Jewish history, the Holocaust, and the founding of Israel. This long, tedious, and difficult odyssey led me back to Judaism and the Jewish community. But that is another, and much longer, story.

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Feminism & Thought Control

Michael Levin

WHEN parents object to profanity in schoolbooks, they are invariably met with answering cries of "censorship" or "thought control," and warned of the dangers of tampering with the First Amendment. Yet while national attention has been focused on the activities of such concerned individuals, one of the most extensive thought-control campaigns in American educational history has gone completely ignored. I am referring to the transformation, in the name of "sex fairness," of textbooks and curricula at all educational levels, with the aim of convincing children that boys and girls are the same. Indeed, the dismantling of "sex roles" has virtually superseded the transmission of information as the aim of the classroom.

The campaign begins with the guidelines issued to authors of textbooks by such major houses as McGraw-Hill, Macmillan, Harper & Row, Lippincott, Rand McNally, Silver Burdett, Scott-Foresman, Laidlaw Brothers, and South-Western. Oddly similar in substance, wording, and even format, these guidelines are in fact not suggestive but mandatory, as authors who transgress them soon discover. (Some houses, like Harper & Row, have review boards with veto power over prospective books.)

The guidelines' stated aim is "fair representation of women" (Silver-Burdett) and "the equal treatment of the sexes" (Harper & Row); but the aim is also "improving the image of women" (Scott-Foresman) and "creating positive sexual [and racial] images" (Macmillan). This points to a basic incoherence of purpose, between showing the world as it is and as ideological feminists believe it ought to be, an incoherence that runs through the guidelines as it does through the feminist movement itself.* Thus, Macmillan advocates acceptance of the deviant—"It is unrealistic and unfair to imply that all one-parent homes are 'broken' homes"—but demands falsification of the norm: "[W]e are more interested in emphasizing what can be, rather than the negatives that still exist. . . ." South-Western is as explicit as these euphemistic documents ever get: "Emphasis is on what can be and should be rather than mirroring what the society is."

So fully does the spirit of falseness permeate the guidelines that it results finally in a pretense that the lie is really true. "Textbooks which avoid male and female stereotyping will more accurately represent reality," says Silver-Burdett in justification of its demand that "no occupation should be shown as reflecting the masculinity or femininity of people pursuing it." The question of whether there might be some *truth* to these so-called "stereotypes" is simply dismissed. Harper & Row pontificates: "Economics texts should not always assume that the consumer is a woman . . . it should not be assumed that all women have marriage and motherhood as goals." (In fact, women in these guidelines never have such goals.) Scott-Foresman asserts that "Because such characteristics [as fear and rudeness] are shared by males and females in reality, textbooks that classify them as 'masculine' or 'feminine' are misrepresenting reality."

On the planet Earth, most consumers *are* women and, as any pediatrician will testify, girls are usually more orderly than boys. Macmillan calls such generalizations "tyrannical, irrelevant, inaccurate, and outdated," but never says why. All that is offered is dogma—"Women and girls should be shown as having the same abilities, interests, and ambitions as men" (McGraw-Hill)—and invention. One of Scott-Foresman's "stylistic" demands is that a sentence like "An ex-stenographer got a job as a stewardess with an airline" be changed to "the ex-stenographer got a degree in accounting."

That these guidelines inhabit their own world becomes clear whenever they approach the dirty pronoun "he." "It may sometimes be best to use the generic *he* frequently," McGraw-Hill concedes, "but to add, in the preface and as often as necessary in the text, emphatic statements to the effect that the masculine pronouns are being used for succinctness and are intended to refer to both females and males." Did anyone ever doubt this? Before McGraw-Hill cleared things up, did wom-

MICHAEL LEVIN is professor of philosophy at CCNY. The present article is adapted from an address which Mr. Levin delivered to the Eagle Council in Washington, D.C. last year.

* See my "The Feminist Mystique," COMMENTARY, December 1980.

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en really think that "he who hesitates is lost" did not apply to them? Did mothers who read unliberated editions of Dr. Spock ignore advice about what to give a daughter if *he* swallowed poison?

So practiced are these guidelines in doublethink that they do acknowledge gender differences, but only to attribute them wholly to "socialization" or to the effect of discrimination. "Where representation in proportion to share of population would be contrived or a distortion of history, notice may be made that the imbalance results from suppression or exclusion of a group's contributions. . . ." (Rand-McNally). Macmillan, illiterately but urgently, asks, "*What about real-life events where women really were in a passive role?* History is replete with instances where women were treated as second-class citizens; current events, too, reflect this lingering bias. We want to depict these facts clearly in our illustrations." The treatment of science is especially tortured, since Macmillan cannot quite bring itself to admit that most scientific discoveries were actually made by men: "Because of the societal roles that have been traditionally assigned in our culture to women and minority people, white males are *credited with* most of the significant achievements in science" (emphasis added). Even so, scientific artwork "should depict women and minority people at least 50 percent of the time, avoiding sexual and racial stereotypes."

Any thought that these guidelines merely suggest a general direction for authors to follow is quickly dispelled by their demand for strict scorekeeping. On one page Macmillan says, "Equal treatment in classroom materials is not a 'numbers game'" but on another it tells illustrators to "*Maintain a 50-50 balance between the sexes*—numerically and in terms of the significance and prominence of the activity illustrated." The guidelines put their stamp on every inch of text, and on every representable human activity. The colors blue and pink are taboo; girls must not be shown "mostly indoors or hovering near doorways, sheltered from the elements, carrying umbrellas when boys are not." The requirements imposed by this strict and specific unisexuality go all the way to Macmillan's advice that "Cosmetics, hair coloring, and other artifices can be discussed for both sexes."

For all the pretense of "balance," however, the one activity never depicted favorably in these guidelines is motherhood. Some grudgingly allow it as "one option" for women, but ban the words "mother" and "housewife" ("homemaker" is permitted). Scott-Foresman decrees that "Showing some women in traditional roles is not sexist if women are shown in other roles as well." But it is never suggested that "non-traditional" depictions need to be balanced in the same way. Officially, the guidelines declare themselves opposed to "patronizing" the traditional role of women, but they manage somehow to patronize it nonetheless: thus, the very draughtsmanship in Lippincott's examples of "bad" illustrations—a family at the zoo, mommy at the grocer's—is grotesque, while its "good" pictures—white father beaming at son, who raises his arms in adoration toward a black woman behind a large desk—are rendered with meticulous clarity.

In their quest for equality, these guidelines for writers also consistently wind up advocating an awkward prose style. Aversion to the word "he" moves South-Western to recommend the passive voice over the active, so that the phrase "why he should feature the merchandise," for example, is to be replaced by "why the merchandise should be featured." Another way to outwit English pronominalization is by repeating nouns obsessively. A sample "bad" paragraph runs:

> A farmer may have harvested 10,000 bushels of wheat. If the price of wheat is $3 a bushel, *he* may sell all his wheat; but if it is only $2 a bushel, *he* may sell only enough to supply *himself* with sufficient cash until *he* can dispose of the rest at a better price.

The approved paraphrase runs:

> A farmer may have harvested 10,000 bushels of wheat. If the price of wheat is $3 a bushel, the farmer may sell all the wheat; but if it is only $2 a bushel, the farmer may sell only enough to provide sufficient cash until the rest can be sold at a better price.

This is not only stupefying, it is inaccurate. "To provide sufficient cash" does not say the same thing as "to supply himself with sufficient cash." The usual aim of writing instruction is to foster the exact use of words; the approved prose here is not only clumsy and turgid in its own right, but sets up clumsiness and turgidity as standards to emulate.

WHAT of the books that emerge from the feminist die? More than just compilations of girl truckdrivers and boy babysitters, they are also endless sermons on the feminist millennium. In *People Need People*, a Holt, Rinehart second-grade reader, the story "Wet Albert" typifies the treatment of males, even six-year-old males, in this new millennium. Hapless, dopey-looking Albert is followed everywhere by a rain cloud until one day there is a drought and by chance he becomes useful. Contrast this with the portrayal of girls in the Holt third-grade reader, *Never Give Up*. A story called "Do You Have Time, Lydia?" described in the teacher's guide as a "realistic story about a busy, creative girl," concerns a heroine—she lives with her father and seems to have no mother—who takes on too many obligations. The story ends when, after many achievements, Lydia also manages to build a go-cart for her helpless younger brother. Another story, "The Hole in the Tree," praises birth, but dutifully stresses that brother Scott is just as enamored of baby animals as is sister Paula.

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Similarly dutiful are the practice sentences which follow the lesson: "Jill seems very grown up," "Judy doesn't like to set the table," "Mother and Daddy like to kiss the baby," and—lest the other half of the lesson be forgotten—"Bobby has chocolate on his face."*

"Christina Katerina and the Box" is an even purer example of the feminist paradigm. Christina has a mother (oddly enough), but one so shadowy as to be absent from the "Teacher's Overview":

> Christina Katerina is a little girl who uses her imagination to convert a big box into several creative playthings in her front yard. With her father's help, she changes a TV box into a castle. When the castle collapses, Christina makes a clubhouse of what is left of the box. [More examples of her ingenuity follow.] Watson, the boy next door, is at first jealous of Christina's imaginative resourcefulness and destroys her creations. Later, he tries to help but ends up inadvertently destroying more of her creations. In the course of the story, Christina's imagination overcomes each obstacle, and in the end, Watson shows that he has entered into the fun. . . .

The curious emphasis on father-daughter relations in books like *Never Give Up*—it is hammered home yet again in the story "Elizabeth, the Bird Watcher"—would not be quite so objectionable were it not freighted with ideology, in this case the feminist myth that mothers cripple daughters by transmitting "passive" values. In the service of this myth children are told over and over, but not told they are being told, that "single-parent" families are numerous and happy.

The ideological barrage does not end with elementary school. A good example of feminist high-school pedagogy is *Viewpoints*, a ninth-grade literature reader from Houghton-Mifflin. A poem by Marge Piercy about her love of hard work and hard workers is followed by "The Perfect Shot," an autobiographical essay by Billie Jean King. "I expect to win every time," says our aggressive, achieving heroine, "I still want to be number one."

Another story in *Viewpoints* sounds a related message, but this time with a male role-model as protagonist. Teruo, the hero of "Say It with Flowers," works in Mr. Sasaki's flower shop; his problem is Mr. Sasaki's insistence that he lie to customers about the quality of the flowers being sold. Teruo is so upright and appreciative of beauty that, in the end, he gives away some choice roses to a girl who likes them, and leaves happily when Mr. Sasaki fires him. This particular story is a marvel of compression, offering in brief compass a minority group, an exquisitely sensitive male, and a businessman who routinely resorts to fraud. In short, the America of feminist imagining.

As to future plans, a recent curriculum report of the National Association of Secondary School Principals suggests that forthcoming high-school texts will be even worse than present ones. Under the heading "back to basics" (a current shibboleth, since even the most obtuse educators have noticed that American parents are becoming restive), the report discloses that there is to be a "new emphasis on traditional themes" in high-school curricula. One example of this "new emphasis": "U.S. history texts that emphasize the World War II home front more than its battlefields." One cannot help suspecting that this will translate into a lot of Rosie the Riveters at the expense of other significant actors and events of the period.

EVEN in higher education, where the autonomy of college students and faculty makes control more difficult, feminism has secured a firm beachhead. College texts, of course, follow standard guidelines. It is no longer "all men" but "all humans" who are mortal in logic books. The cover of A.C.C. MacKenzie's *The Major Achievements of Science* (Simon & Schuster) features a small picture of Newton, a small picture of Einstein, and a big picture of—presumably the greatest physicist of the three—Madame Curie.

But it is in the area of "Women's Studies" that feminists have left their stamp most clearly in the academy. Typically, they want it both ways: to win the game while playing by their own rules. They complain that discrimination has barred them from the rigorous, prestigious disciplines, yet, given a free hand and lavish funds by cooperative administrators, they have so far produced mainly a lot of consciousness-raising and pep talks for personal growth.

A typical selection of Women's Studies textbooks used in New York colleges includes the best-selling manual, *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, put out by the Boston Women's Health Collective; a sprinkling of novels like Margaret Atwood's *Surfacing* (about the author's dissatisfaction with male lovemaking); Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* (an older novel on a similar theme); Alix Kate Shulman's *Memoirs of an Ex-Prom Queen* (about a girl seduced by her philosophy professor); and Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*. Courses in Women's Studies are easy in a way that standard college courses—in chemistry, or Shakespeare—are not. Occasionally, a book will appear on the reading list that has the trappings of academic respectability—Sheila Ruth's anthology, *Issues in Feminism*, for example. This actually looks like a book, is smartly produced, and has its share of charts and graphs, but on closer inspection it too proves to be non-business as usual: Betty Friedan,

* The Laidlaw Brothers *Good English* program features such sample sentences as: "Mrs. Ito was the referee"; "She and José shared an adventure with a bear"; and "Meg was practicing karate." To "show that males can be passive," it offers, "The boys have lain in hammocks all afternoon."

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Virginia Woolf, Engels, and broadsides for the ERA.

There is of course an unresolved tension in the very concept of Women's Studies. If the sexes do experience the world differently, perhaps some disciplines *are* "masculine," and perhaps there is some justice in thinking that mathematics, say, is a male province and literature a female one. If, however, there are no such cognitive differences, what is the justification for courses in "women's history" in the first place? Miss Ruth senses this difficulty, and explains that feminist pedagogy is "unorthodox": its teachers "frequently come from counterculture organizations, from consciousness-raising groups and feminist organizations, from political parties and equal-rights agencies. . . . One is apt to find group projects, credit for social-change activities or for life experience, contracts or self-grading, diaries and journals, even meditation or ritual." More depressing even than this drivel is the indulgence of academic officers who grant it college credits.*

THE long-term effects of feminist ideology in education are yet to be measured. Social scientists, so quick to study all sorts of other cultural phenomena, have ignored the impact of feminist censorship on children. Still, a few observations are in order.

The gap between the way boys and girls actually behave in the world and the way they behave in these books is bound to be deeply disconcerting to children. Are they supposed to notice the message, or ingest it subliminally, or what? Perhaps the cause might be served by having books in which pictures of a unisex world were explicitly marked "the ideal," while pictures of the actual world were marked "the real."

Carried to its logical conclusion, feminism would seem to demand books showing neuters going about erstwhile human activities, and perhaps this too will come to pass. In the meantime, however, boys and girls must somehow be distinguished from one another, even if the purpose is to demonstrate that they are alike. Thus, even the most dedicated feminist texts call on the usual signs of gender: long hair dutifully pokes out of one-third of all baseball caps. However, since *feminine* girls are forbidden, the uneasy compromise is a creature doing things that children almost never see females do. One such creature, in one of Lippincott's "good" drawings, swings a bat with a form that Hank Aaron would envy.

What do children derive from this faith in the power of image over reality, this preoccupation with the atypical? At best, one would guess, confusion, at worst scorn for the mendacity of their elders. And these are the children whose exposure to such texts is supposed to help turn them into "autonomous" adults.

Beyond the moral and psychological consequences, there is the pedagogical effect of systematic distortions of reality. Feminist pedagogy creates a curious discord. Alongside the nominal subjects of these new texts, another lesson is running relentlessly—the feminist world view. When the child is trying to learn spelling, he is also being taught that women are (can be? should be? have been prevented from being?) firemen. Children are now being asked, indeed being required, to learn two things at once, and the hidden lesson has nothing to do with the overt lesson. Worse, the instructor cannot even be frank about the existence of a hidden lesson. The net effect must be distraction, and an impairment in concentration.

ONE cannot help wondering why educators, and especially publishers, have been so generous in their help to the feminist cause. One part of the answer has to do with the involvement of the federal government in education. The Women's Education Equity Act Program (WEEAP), Title IX of the 1972 amendments to the Civil Rights Act, and Title IV of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 have thrown the full weight of Washington on the feminists' side. For example, under Title IV of the ESEA, the federal government endorses certain "exemplary" experimental programs that have the stated intention of "changing the values" of schools and students, and disseminating these programs through federal channels. No publisher is likely to bring out a book that will get his firm censured for being insufficiently "exemplary" or "experimental."

WEEAP subsidizes feminist control even more blatantly by giving hundreds of thousands of dollars to feminist organizations for the express purpose of tracking down "sexism" in schoolbooks and bringing it to the attention of local authorities. In the last two years WEEAP has given $244,000 to the Council on Interracial Books for Children to prepare a handbook entitled "Equity Models for Basal Readers," which provides detailed algorithms for detecting sexism (and "ageism" and "handicapism") in schoolbooks—"sexism" being construed here to include the failure to advocate role-changing. WEEAP has also given over $300,000 to the NOW Legal Defense Fund for its "National Title IX Grass-Roots Action Campaign." (Imagine the furor if public money were to finance a Moral Majority expedition in search of anti-American sentiments in schoolbooks.) Indeed, should the feminist imagination flag, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights is right there to prod it with such inspirational articles

* Some of the academic "research" in this field defies summary. The Stony Brook College Society for Women in Philosophy, for instance, recently presented a lecture on "Images of Lesbian Sexuality in the Fine Arts," a program of "images of women loving women." The lecturer was one Tee Corinne, described as the illustrator of such books as *I Am My Lover* and *The Cunt Coloring Book*.

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as "Twelve Ways to Avoid the Sexist Singular."*

Thus, the notion that feminists are offering their goods in the free marketplace of ideas is entirely erroneous. Curiously, the reverse misapprehension has come to surround the Family Protection Act, which, it is said (by the Detroit *Free Press*, among others), would lure localities back to "traditional" books with the carrot of federal funds. In point of fact, the key language of FPA—that federal funds shall not be used "to promote educational material that denigrates the role of women as it has been historically understood"—is explicitly designed to curb the excesses of none other than WEEAP, which has resisted absorption into any bloc grants.

Legally, the federal government is committed to neutrality, since the General Education Provision Act expressly forbids the "direction, supervision, or control" of curricula by any grantee, contractor, or employee of the U.S. goverment. However, as the 1980 report of the President's Advisory Committee for Women notes, WEEAP was created "to improve instructional materials and approaches." And the National Endowment for the Humanities must have been ignorant of this statute when it gave funds to the American Historical Association for training 200 teachers to "integrate women's history into high-school curricula" and to "revise curricula in women's history."

Yet even these hidden and overt governmental pressures on publishers cannot account for the speed and alacrity with which the industry has jumped on the feminist bandwagon. As I have learned from discussing these matters with senior editors (and educators) who are sincerely contemptuous of anyone questioning feminist pedagogy, the publishing industry is itself made up of many True Believers, eager to promote anything labeled "progressive" and fearful above all of not being in tune with the times.

Saying this, of course, raises more questions than it answers. It leaves unexplained the appeal of feminism to intellectuals, and the passivity with which so many parents—who may assent to feminist slogans but are anything but militant feminists themselves—accept feminism as the wave of the future. These questions must await the sociology of the far future. But part of the answer, at least, lies in the distorting effect of feminist ideology itself on the debate between advocates and opponents of feminist indoctrination.

Feminist doctrine holds that all education manipulates. For a feminist, a book about trucks written in 1940 is as much an instrument of social control, a tool for fixing a child's sexual perceptions, as her own minutely calibrated counter-primer. Feminists follow Marx in stressing what they like to call the "objective" function of social objects. Even if traditional schoolbooks were interested only in informing, and happened to show decorous little girls because that is what their authors saw in the world around them, these books were nonetheless "objective" instruments of patriarchal brainwashing.

Given this view of society, it is no wonder that feminists and their allies denounce the idea that authors be judged on purely educational grounds as itself censorial, as an effort to "put women in their place." The media have perpetuated this absurdity by casting worried parents in the role of so many Grand Inquisitors, but its real source is the feminist conviction that true objectivity is impossible. In the Orwellian world of contemporary feminism, objectivity is "sexism by omission."

* In *Perspectives: The Civil Rights Quarterly*, published by the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Spring 1981.

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Blaming the (Jewish) Victim

Roger Starr

ALMOST exactly on the 44th anniversary of Hitler's invasion of Austria, I happened to be having lunch in New York with one of my oldest and dearest friends. He had been an undergraduate with me in the years just before World War II broke out. There is no specific connection between the *Anschluss* anniversary and our meeting, except that, after he started talking to me about his reactions as a non-Jew to Israel at the present time, and most particularly to Menachem Begin and his policies, I found myself thinking of those long-ago days when the European Jewish community was beginning to disappear, while none who cared was able to do anything about it. I think it is fair to say that, with very few exceptions, the non-Jews at the university we attended had almost no interest in the problems of European Jews, or any other Jews for that matter. While my friend made a serious and sincere effort, I am convinced, to understand the problem, it never seemed as important to him as the possibility of war, which he dreaded. He was bitterly opposed to violence. When war later came, he, after a long internal struggle over whether he should register as a conscientious objector or simply refuse to notice the draft at all and take the consequences, chose to register as an objector.

My friend was obviously a man of deep conviction and the utmost seriousness, and while clearly he and I disagreed on many subjects, I was sure he did not share what I took to be the dominant mood of the university, both undergraduate and faculty, that if the Jews of Germany and Austria were having problems, they probably had done something to provoke them, although, of course, few if any favored the "crudity" of Hitler's methods. My friend expressed to me on several occasions his feeling that the immense enthusiasm of the Germans for their new government, their solidarity, their willingness to try something totally different from their past experience, awakened in him the sense that theirs was an important historical movement. When I asked him how he, as a pacifist, found it possible to express any sympathy, however limited or qualified, for a government whose intention was clearly that of rearming and preparing to use force to remake the European map, he explained that the Germans were merely trying to protect themselves against the French.

All this came back to me later the same afternoon as I recalled our discussion at lunch. I had thought of him as being greatly sympathetic to Israel; and indeed so he had been some years ago when the subject had last come up between us. He was then closely associated intellectually with Erich Gutkind (the author of *Choose Life*) and had told me that Israel, which was trying to do something very different from anything that had been tried before (as one can see, the hope for some great renewing experience for mankind was one of the persistent themes in my friend's thought), was the only place in the world he was interested in visiting.

During our lunch, however, he indicated that he had changed his mind about Israel. Approaching the subject with great diffidence he told me he was appalled by the Israelis' attack on the Iraqi atomic energy plant; by Israel's annexation, as he put it, of the Golan Heights; by Begin, the terrorist, as he described him; and by Begin's insistence on expanding into the West Bank. Why did American Jews remain so silent in the face of these outrages? Did we not know what our fellow, non-Jewish Americans were saying to each other about the nation's commitment to Israel, the dangers involved, and the undeniable fact that Israel had lost the moral superiority and inspiration that had once made it a special nation among nations?

It is not important to repeat what I said in answer to all of this, none of which made the slightest impression on my friend. He seemed unmoved when I suggested that Israel was the only nation I could think of in all history that, in order to achieve peace with its neighbor, had decided to give up territory at tremendous internal costs. He was equally unmoved when I added that the burden of proof of peaceful intentions in the rest of the region therefore rested not on Israel but on the Arab nations that had refused to recognize or meet with Israel.

THE conversation saddened and perplexed me, but I felt considerably more disturbed when I received from my friend a few days later a letter in which he enclosed a copy of a review of three books about the Middle East which had recently appeared in the *London Review of Books*. The author was Ian Gilmour, a prominent British politician and one-time shadow Foreign Secretary while the opposition Labor party was in power, and my friend asked me for my opinion of the review. Since what he had said to me at lunch was simply a restatement of the arguments set forth by Gilmour, I had nothing more to reply to him.

The first paragraph of Gilmour's article establishes its tone and point. He charges that Israel controls American policy in the Middle

ROGER STARR *is a member of the Editorial Board of the New York* Times.

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East to a degree humiliating to Americans. As a result, he implies, Palestinians are in exile, Lebanon is wrecked, other Arabs fear Israeli "expansionism," the Soviet Union's prestige has climbed, and Americans try to claim, wrongly, that Soviet penetration of the Middle East is more important than the "Palestinian issue." The paragraph concludes with the statement that "the risk of a conflagration in the area grows."

It is not my intention to argue in detail with Gilmour's attack on American policy and Israeli "expansionism," although I disagree with it. I must, however, register my fascination with his ability to ascribe almost magical and infinite consequences to the doings of Israel; it may be that one should say, rather, to the activities of Jews.

It is certainly true that the Jewish community, much of which is active politically, has an effect on American policy in the Middle East. But cannot the same be said about the oil interests, the economic interests linked with them, the foreign-policy establishment, the Christian churches and church-affiliated schools, and other institutions connected with the Middle East? Why should Israel be singled out as "controlling" American policy? Is it Israel that put the Palestinians in "exile"—itself a word that imputes much greater power to the Israelis than they actually possess, since many Palestinian Arabs still live in Israel despite what Gilmour assumes to be Israel's effort to make exiles of them all? Is it Israel, is it the Jews, who are responsible for the fact that there is no Palestinian state (assuming, as Gilmour does, that Jordan is not such a state, even though a large majority of its inhabitants are Palestinians)? Why was no new Palestinian state created on the West Bank during the nineteen years of Jordanian rule? As for Lebanon, is it Israel, or the tension between Muslims and Christians, and the interference of other Arab states, that has produced the debacle there? And whence comes the danger of a "conflagration" in the Middle East? From Israel alone? Not from Iraq and Iran? Not from Libya? Not from Syria?

The extraordinary feature of Gilmour's article, and of my old friend's attitude toward the current situation, is the immense importance they attach to everything the Jewish state does or does not do, while paying little or no attention to other events that would seem to hold equally or even more sinister portents for world peace. Why does the Iraqi attack on Iran not elicit the same resentment as the attack by Israel on the Iraqi reactor? Why does Gilmour blame the absence of a Palestinian state on the Jews, who accepted the partition of Palestine when it was decreed by the United Nations in 1947, rather than on the refusal of the Palestinians to accept their part? Why does my old friend talk about Jewish expansionism in the Golan Heights and say nothing about the Jordanian annexation of the West Bank at the end of the first Arab-Israel war, when that area was to be the site of that very Palestinian state?

THESE questions inevitably lead me back to the attitudes toward the threat of a European war in the 1930's, and the readiness of my old friend to see something inspiring in the enthusiansm of Germans over the new arrangements promised them by Hitler. I wrote, a few paragraphs above, that I thought my non-Jewish college mates assumed that if the Germans mistreated the Jews, then the Jews must have done something to deserve it. The readiness to accept such a shaky and inhumane conclusion puzzled me at the time. I see now that it presaged America's unreadiness to help European Jews on a scale commensurate with the horrors they faced. But sensing now my friend's indignation at Israel, and the notes of condemnation arising all over the world for offenses by Israel that, even if they were not justified by the will to survive, are much smaller than offenses by other nations against whom no such voices are raised, I think my formulation was wrong. The conditional mood of my statement was in error. Those who paid no attention to Hitler's war against the Jews did not believe that if the Jews were punished, it might have been because they had done something wrong. It seems to me now that they were convinced that the Jews *had* done something very wrong, and therefore they were being *justly* punished.

Why, my friend wrote in transmitting Gilmour's article, does not Begin go to the Arab countries and make the same peaceful and generous gestures Sadat made to Israel? He had asked the same question when we were at lunch. Because they won't let him in, I replied then. And now I would add: by assuming that Israel is to blame, you are helping them believe that they will never have to.

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Rich Met, Poor Met

Samuel Lipman

OUR premier opera company will be 100 years old on October 22, 1983. Its history began in the old Metropolitan Opera House on Broadway just below Manhattan's Times Square. The anniversary celebration will take place just twenty-five or so blocks to the north, in the palatial monument bearing the company's name at the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts. During this first century, the Met has thus had only two homes.

For a long time it has also often seemed that the Met's sponsors have been similarly unchanging. The old Met building was put up in the post-Civil War era by New York millionaires angry at being shut out of the more genteel society which then surrounded operatic production in the city. The names of some of these upstart nabobs—Vanderbilt, Astor, Morgan—bulk large in our social and commercial history; so too do such early Met names as Roosevelt, snatched from the camp of the elite Knickerbocker enemy. These notables and their families were eventually succeeded by such equally famous figures as Otto Kahn (a partner in Kuhn, Loeb) and Cornelius Bliss (an associate of J.P. Morgan). To this day, even when the names involved have been less firmly rooted in our past, the financial and business direction of the Met has remained in the hands of those securely occupying the commanding heights of the American establishment.

Beneath the unchanging façade of patrician power, however, lies a quite different picture of adaptation to changing times and conditions.

As recently as the 1920's, the Met made an annual profit. Even before the fat years, the burden on the backers of grand opera had hardly been onerous, either in the demands of the company itself or in the ability of the then-almost-untaxed rich to pay. Indeed, it would seem that the individual assessment paid by each founding family from 1883 until the abolition of free box privileges in 1940 amounted to something under a yearly average of $5,500.

The Depression changed this happy state of affairs. Attendance sagged, and with it ticket income. Attempts—brilliantly successful from the beginning—were made to broaden and enlarge the Met's public. In 1935, Mrs. August Belmont (another of the great names) founded the Metropolitan Opera Guild, a national organization built around the listeners to the Met's national radio broadcasts, which had begun in the early 1930's. From an initial membership of no more than 2,000, the Guild now boasts over 100,000, all of whom receive a copy of the glossy magazine *Opera News*, one of the two leading publications of its kind in the world; it is the achievement of *Opera News* that it both serves as house organ for the Met and provides coverage of opera elsewhere in America and in Europe.

Nor was the Met slow in adapting to the possibilities which developed in the Great Society years for the wider dissemination of culture. After a shaky start in the preceding two decades, the company embraced television, finally emerging in the 1970's as the crown jewel in the efforts of the Public Broadcasting Service to bring culture to the masses and the masses to culture. Using recently developed and relatively unobtrusive camera and lighting techniques, the Met has found it possible to telecast opera under the conditions of live performance; capitalizing upon its position in Lincoln Center and in New York, the company has been able to generate viewing audiences of hitherto unparalleled size to watch the famous operas of the repertory. To these audiences it has assiduously spread the gospel of opera at the Metropolitan.

So successful has it been at this kind of evangelizing that if any one thing can be said to be the Met's forte, it is marketing. Master of all the procedures which contemporary public relations has developed and which electronics have made possible, the Met uses direct mailing and computer-based refinements of analysis to identify and reach its potential audience. To that audience it sells opera books and records, an entire range of such memorabilia as posters from the past, calendars, and the inevitable T-shirts and tote bags. A recent "Met by Mail" catalogue offered a Met shower curtain, a *La Bohème* bath sheet, and—a rather more expensive ($3,400) way of showing one's love of art—a 17″-high replica of a Met chandelier, produced by the same Austrian firm which made the originals.

IF THE Met is up-to-date in its marketing procedures, it has also not lagged behind in that quintessential component of contemporary artistic life, fund-raising. The old technique of passing the hat to one's friends hardly suffices under modern conditions of multimillion-dollar budgets. And even the largest audiences, paying the highest ticket prices, cannot fund the demands of artists sought the world over, powerful unions representing musicians, chorus, and technical employees, and the administrative

SAMUEL LIPMAN, COMMENTARY's *regular music critic,, is publisher of the* New Criterion, *a monthly cultural review edited by Hilton Kramer which will begin publication in the fall.*

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staffs necessary to bring the audiences in. So the net must be cast wide, to catch the small givers, the rich patrons, the culturally disposed foundations, and above all, those Loreleis of philanthropy, medium-sized and large corporations.

Just how well the Met has succeeded in getting money is shown by the current state of its Centennial Fund endowment drive, begun in mid-1980 and scheduled to last four years. By December of last year, only eighteen months after its inception, the campaign had raised over $54 million in contributions and pledges from 130 individuals, foundations, and corporations. This amount, which averages out to more than $415,000 per contributor, has come from, among other corporations, Exxon and Texaco, IBM and AT&T, Chemical Bank and Avon; among corporate foundations kicking in are those of Mobil, Shell, and Union Oil, General Electric and U.S. Steel, and Metropolitan Life. By late winter it was being said that over $60 million had been raised, and prospects for the future look so good that a decision may be made to continue raising funds well past the original $100-million target.

The result of all this activity is that the Metropolitan Opera remains today a totally private institution, alone of all the great opera companies in the world—among them Berlin, London's Covent Garden, Milan's La Scala, Paris, and Vienna. Whereas all the others are not only largely funded but indeed made possible by lavish government support, the Met receives only trifling federal, state, and local subsidies; perhaps the most important official help comes from the privileged access the Met has to public television. For the rest of its enormous budget, the Met goes it alone, supplementing earned income (approximately a relatively high two-thirds of the total) with contributions. Governance of the Met is still, as in the old days, in private hands.

TEMPTING as it must be to those concerned to rejoice in such a staggering accomplishment—all the more remarkable against a general background of gloom in fund-raising for the arts and during a time of economic readjustment and possible government-aid cutbacks—the fact remains that the money being raised is for an artistic purpose, and long after contributors and administrators will have been forgotten, the reputation of the Met will be determined by what that purpose is and how it has been served.

Like all great operatic enterprises, the Metropolitan Opera has from the beginning been an agglomeration of star singers performing a repertory largely composed of the most popular works. This was as true at the turn of the century as it is, *mutatis mutandis*, today. Just about every great singer of the century, from Caruso on down, has sung, usually repeatedly, at the Met. Not surprisingly, the operas that have been done the most frequently are the most famous ones. Verdi's *Il Trovatore* has been given over 300 times, and *La Traviata* almost 500. Puccini's *La Bohème* has now achieved almost 600 performances, and even a work so relatively little known (in recent times) as Wagner's *Tannhäuser* is near the 300 mark.

Frequently, though by no means always, the quality of orchestral direction at the Met has been notable. Felix Mottl (a Wagner disciple of Bayreuth fame) and Gustav Mahler appeared with the company before 1910. Arturo Toscanini, first conducting at the Met in 1908, was artistic director of the company until 1915. In the 1920's the Met podium was occupied by, among others, the little-appreciated Artur Bodanzky and the great Italian operatic *maestro* Tullio Serafin. In the 1930's and 1940's, aided by the refugee flight from Europe, the supply of important conductors at the Met included such historic names as Fritz Busch, Fritz Reiner, George Szell, and Bruno Walter, as well as Sir Thomas Beecham. In the more recent period of the 1950's and the 1960's the famous included Ernest Ansermet, Karl Böhm, Herbert von Karajan, Rudolf Kempe, Josef Krips, Dimitri Mitropoulos, Pierre Monteux, Georg Solti, and Leopold Stokowski.

But all this concerns fame and stars. Music does not live (to quote a witty line from Hugo Weisgall's opera, *Six Characters in Search of an Author*) by *Faust* alone. If an opera company wishes to be more than a platform for artistically safe (even if financially risky) ventures, it has three duties beyond the presentation of the already accepted and acceptable. Simply put, these duties are, first, to present a balanced view of the past; second, to explore the art of the present day; and third, to encourage the art of the company's own place. For the greatest institutions to maintain their reputations, these duties—always in addition to the presentation of those celebrities and their vehicles which alone make everything else possible—must be accomplished simultaneously. To give up on the past and devote oneself only to the contemporary is to lose the perspectives of both history and quality; to give up on one's own time is to become irrelevant to changing taste and creation; to ignore one's own place is to become rootless, without distinctive flavor and cultural resonance.

Throughout this century the Metropolitan has compiled a varied record in fulfilling its three duties. In the course of offering celebrity opera it has, over the long run, found it possible to give a reasonably representative picture of the operatic past. Older novelties and revivals, combined with many star singers of idiosyncratic abilities and preferences in repertory, have kept both audience and backers happy; normal circulation of the famous repertory, based on the availability of casts, has introduced reasonable flexibility into the choice of works produced.

The Metropolitan's relation to the works of the day has, sad to say, become progressively weaker as the number of new works seen to be commercially viable has steadily dwindled. At the turn of the century, the situation was vastly different. Then, the greatest operas of Wagner were none of them more than thirty-five years old; his last opera, *Parsifal*, had been performed for the first time at Bayreuth in 1882, and received its first showing

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away from that shrine in a pirated production at the Met in 1908. In 1900, Verdi's *Aida* was only twenty-nine years old, *Otello* thirteen, and *Falstaff* seven; Puccini's *La Bohème* and *Tosca* were contemporary products, hot from the composer's pen. Not only was the freshness of these works no handicap to their entry into the repertory, it was in fact a great point in their favor.

This state of affairs was not to last. While the later works of Puccini continued to receive timely performances at the Met, Strauss's *Salome* (1905), first done at the Met in 1907, was not given again until 1934; *Elektra* (1906-08) did not appear at all at the Met until 1932. Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande* (1892-1902) waited for its first Met performance until 1925. Berg's two great operas, *Wozzeck* (1914-21) and *Lulu* (1928-34), did not come to the Met until 1959 and 1977, respectively. While since World War II the Met has made a limited commitment to the new by doing operas of Britten, Poulenc, and Weill, several renowned works, each of them in some way cornerstones of the modern sensibility, have not been put on by the Met until this day. Among them are Busoni's *Doktor Faust* (1916-24), Hindemith's *Mathis der Maler* (1938), and, above all, Schoenberg's *Moses und Aron* (1932-51). Even Pfitzner's arch-conservative *Palestrina* (1917) has been passed by.

The Metropolitan's record in the development and use of American singers is, by contrast, excellent. For almost three-quarters of a century, native singers have not only been employed in workaday roles; they have also achieved major solo careers sufficient to attract large audiences. In the Golden Age of singing in the decades around World War I, these stars included Geraldine Farrar, Alma Gluck, Louise Homer, and Rosa Ponselle. Later, during the 1930's, such famous names as Richard Crooks, Grace Moore, and Lawrence Tibbett were on the company roster. In the 1940's and 1950's Robert Merrill, Jan Peerce, Risë Stevens, Helen Traubel, Richard Tucker, and Leonard Warren became Met celebrities. In our own time, three of the Met's biggest draws are Marilyn Horne, Sherrill Milnes, and Leontyne Price. And the list goes on: a recent Met program points with pride to the large number of Metropolitan Opera Audition winners appearing this season—among them Grace Bumbry, Shirley Verrett, and Ruth Welting.

THE relation of the Met to American operatic composition has hardly been so strong or so consistent. It is true that out of the nearly 250 works in the company's historic repertory, 25 have been American. The list begins with Frederick Converse's *The Pipe of Desire* (1905), performed by the Met in 1910; it ends with Marvin David Levy's *Mourning Becomes Electra* (1967), first given during the inaugural season at Lincoln Center. But most of the Met's American works were done prior to World War II. Though several of these—Victor Herbert's *Natoma* (1911), Deems Taylor's *The King's Henchman* (1927) and *Peter Ibbetson* (1931), Louis Gruenberg's *The Emperor Jones* (1932), and Howard Hanson's *Merry Mount* (1933)—are resonant presences in the history books, they all seem fated, for one reason or another, not to be revived.*

In the years after World War II, American opera at the Met was represented by (in addition to Levy's *Mourning*) two operas of Samuel Barber, *Vanessa* (1958) and *Antony and Cleopatra* (1966), and one of Gian Carlo Menotti, *The Last Savage* (1963). Though *Antony* was commissioned by the Met for its opening at Lincoln Center, and performed on that occasion with a notable cast and a distinguished audience in attendance, the opera proved unpopular with public and press; so strong was the reaction of Met management to this failure that the cause of national opera itself was set back many years. Even Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress,* hardly American but nonetheless written here in English and performed at the Met in two seasons during the 1950's, has vanished from sight and sound.

Since the 1960's, there has been no American opera at the Met. Two new works have been commissioned for eventual performance, one from the modernist Jacob Druckman, and another from the rather more crowd-pleasing John Corigliano. But both these works are still in the future, with their completion and performance schedules as yet unclear.

AT THE heart of all the artistic activities of the Metropolitan Opera, it goes without saying, is the company's management. This management is ultimately responsible for all decisions of repertory, casting, and production. It is a responsibility which is—and must be —delegated, but which cannot long be evaded.

In this century, there have been three important administrative regimes at the Metropolitan. The Italian Guilio Gatti-Casazza (1908-35) inherited Caruso and brought Toscanini to the company. In addition to his successful work as shepherd of the stars, he showed some interest in new American and European works. Gatti's long tenure was succeeded by the interregnum of the Canadian Edward Johnson; wartime conditions facilitated Johnson's replacement of imported singers by home-grown colleagues. The masterful and voluble Sir Rudolf Bing—knighted in 1971 by Queen Elizabeth II—reigned from 1950 to 1972, bringing to the house a sharpened discipline and a feeling for glittering production values. His clearly announced views on modern music and box-office risks produced a Met up-to-date in every area save repertory.

Bing's retirement (only partly, it would seem, at his own wish) brought on an uneasy situation confused as much by ill-luck as by conscious design. The Swedish opera director and administrator Goeran Gentele was appointed in

* Given these works' virtually complete disappearance, it is good that a 1978 release brings together early recordings from all of them save *Peter Ibbetson* in performance contemporary with their presentation at the Metropolitan. This LP, New World Records NW 241, makes clear not only what has been lost, but what was never continued.

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1970 to take Bing's place; shortly after his term of office began, he was killed in an automobile accident. Schuyler Chapin, Gentele's assistant, was hired first as a temporary and then as permanent general manager. One of Chapin's first acts was to appoint the well-known Czech conductor Rafael Kubelik to the newly created post of music director; Kubelik resigned before the end of his first season because (according to Bing) he did not receive the proper prerogatives his manager desired for him.

In musical decisions, Chapin now relied increasingly on the young James Levine, American-born, American-trained, and certainly the most successful American conductor to come along since Leonard Bernstein. While Levine has lasted at the Met, Chapin has not; he was soon done in by his own lack of decisiveness and, according to some, by a lack of support from the board.

BY THE mid-1970's, a new administration had come in, and save in one respect it is with us still. At the outset, this new management was a troika. Levine was music director, the English stage director John Dexter was director of production, and Anthony Bliss (who had earlier, from 1956 to 1967, been the Met's president) assumed, as executive director, a position *primus inter pares*. At the present time Dexter is gone from the triumvirate; Levine's post remains as before; and Bliss, as of January 1981, became general manager, a title which the company had supposedly renounced in 1975.

To the Met's present fund-raising success has been joined a business-like management, utilizing every modern technique of financial and personnel administration. Only one mishap has marred the generally refulgent picture of prosperity and progress. A 1980 orchestral dispute lasting almost three months resulted in the cancellation of almost 100 performances. The fracas—usually referred to as a management lockout—ended with a contract both raising wages and sharply reducing the musicians' weekly workload; intemperate statements on both sides added to an already deep labor-management distrust perhaps unequaled in major American musical institutions.

The effects of the 1980 troubles, coming as they did at the beginning of the season, effectively removed the possibility of judging the offerings of 1980-81 on a fulfilled artistic basis. Two productions of that truncated year did, however, earn wide comment. A French triple bill, taking the name of *Parade* from the ballet (1917) of Erik Satie with which it began, also included Poulenc's *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* (1947) and Ravel's *L'Enfant et les Sortilèges* (1920-25). Mainly significant for the Met debut (at age seventy-six!) of the French opera conductor Manuel Rosenthal and the presence in the house of an elite and fashionable artist-intellectual audience little seen these days at musical events, *Parade* was ecstatically received by a press anxious to demonstrate that there is *some* contemporary music it likes. In aesthetic terms, it seemed that the only purpose served by the production (other than providing a moderately diverting evening) was that of satisfying some of the Met's obligations to this century in music and art.

If in fact that was the aim, another of last season's offerings accomplished it in a vastly more serious way. The full three-act version of Berg's *Lulu*, completed by Friedrich Cerha, received a visually stunning production, enhanced by not one but two remarkable portrayals of the title role. One was by the role's intended singer, Teresa Stratas; the other, provided when Miss Stratas became ill, was by the Hispanic-American soprano Julia Migenes-Johnson. Both singers triumphed in a work that impressed at least this listener as the last great 19th-century operatic masterpiece, though it has earned contemporary classification thanks to its lurid plot and the learned commentaries Berg's closely wrought music has accumulated.

THE present season has fortunately been complete. Comprising 27 works by 11 composers, the repertory included two triple bills: Puccini's *Il Trittico*, consisting of *Il Tabarro, Suor Angelica*, and *Gianni Schicchi*, and an homage to Stravinsky, beginning with a ballet performance of *Le Sacre du printemps*, continuing with *Le Rossignol*, and ending with *Oedipus Rex*. Of Mozart there were *Così fan tutte* in a new production, *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, and *Die Zauberflöte*. The German heavyweights included *Fidelio* of Beethoven, Wagner's *Tannhäuser, Das Rheingold, Siegfried*, and *Parsifal*, and Richard Strauss's *Die Frau ohne Schatten*. French music was represented by a new production of Offenbach's *Tales of Hoffmann*. The perennial children's favorite, Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel*, was there for the Christmas crowd. The rest was Italian: Bellini's *Norma*, Rossini's *Barber of Seville* (in a new production); Puccini's *Madame Butterfly, La Bohème*, and *Tosca* (in addition to *Il Trittico*); Verdi's *Luisa Miller, Rigoletto, La Traviata, Il Trovatore*, and *I Vespri Siciliani*.

The early part of the season was disfigured by stunningly inadequate performances of *Rheingold* and *Siegfried*. That only these two operas—of the four in the *Ring* cycle, the least able to stand on their own—were performed this season is itself a consequence both of the labor troubles of last year and persistent difficulties in casting major Wagnerian roles. Be that as it may, both operas were poorly sung, conducted in pedestrian fashion by the respected Erich Leinsdorf, and shabbily staged in the old Met "neo-Bayreuth" mode, which has now grown stale and aimless. Perhaps worst of all, the Met orchestra played Wagner's music badly, showing both raggedness and apathy.

Leinsdorf redeemed himself in October with a fine *Frau ohne Schatten*, strongly cast with both Birgit Nilsson and Eva Marton appearing together in the same work. The once hugely imposing production has now begun to seem something of a monumental curiosity, but it could be said of this presentation, as of few this season, that musical values were largely well served.

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By contrast, Levine's *Tannhäuser* in January, along with his April *Parsifal,* seemed more dutiful than compelling. In *Tannhäuser,* Leonie Rysanek's Elisabeth received the usual plaudits, though she struck me as artificial in stage deportment and out-of-tune in vocally important passages. The worldwide shortage of tenors capable of strong singing and believable acting made itself felt here, too. Missing in *Parsifal,* as in previous seasons, was any suggestion on Levine's part that he had identified himself either with Wagner's transcendent music or with the composer's more dubious religious conceptions.* Moreover, the leading roles were much less adequately sung than they had been in past years.

THE new Stravinsky triple bill catered to an audience remarkably similar to that served by *Parade* the previous season. Again the evening began with a ballet, and perhaps for a similar reason: minute for minute, ballets are simpler and cheaper to put on than Met-scale opera. But in this case the ballet—the once infamous *Le Sacre du printemps*—is a symphonic showpiece, part of the repertory of every virtuoso orchestra in the world. At the same time it has a long history of unsatisfactory rendering as a ballet. The Met orchestral performance did not, in fact, come up to the standard of the New York Philharmonic, its competition across Lincoln Center Plaza; the dancing was hardly stirring; and English painter David Hockney's much ballyhooed decor seemed both sparse and (dare one use the word?) hackneyed.

Matters improved in *Le Rossignol.* Inspired dancing by Natalia Makarova, and sensitive surroundings created by Hockney, combined with excellent singing and diction (from the pit) by Gwendolyn Bradley and Philip Creech, made the work vastly more affecting than it has often seemed in recorded or concert performance. *Oedipus Rex,* though visually arresting—the narrator was even made up to look like Jean Cocteau, the work's librettist (along with Stravinsky)—seemed to lack the archaic, mythic quality conjured up by the composer. What was substituted instead came closer to being peculiar and even a little nasty.

WITHOUT doubt the centerpiece of the entire season was the eagerly awaited Franco Zeffirelli production of *La Bohème.* In its first performance (and as televised) it featured Teresa Stratas as Mimi, José Carreras as Rodolfo, and Renata Scotto as Musetta. Later in the season Teresa Zylis-Gara replaced Stratas, Placido Domingo came in for Carreras, and Migenes-Johnson for Scotto. The original cast, as viewed on television, seemed to be overacting for the camera; the replacement cast, at least as viewed in the house, was less histrionic, and the result therefore dramatically more believable and vocally even superior, though Migenes-Johnson did sound dwarfed by the huge voices of the two stars. Levine's conducting, common to both casts, was straightforward and even compelling in a no-nonsense way. Still, to a listener aware (from records) of Toscanini's burning intensity in this music, of Beecham's unbuttoned lyricism, of the Italian afflatus surrounding the performance of the fabled tenor Beniamino Gigli, conducting and singing alike seemed both unidiomatic and unmoving.

The Zeffirelli-designed sets, on the other hand, were (and are; they will doubtless remain in use for the next generation) a kind of marvel of the age. The first- and fourth-act set, scene of initial joy and final tragedy, used the whole enormous Met stage to present a picture not only of Rodolfo's garret but also of what looked like half the roofs of Paris as well. The third-act set, a winter scene recalling a kind of Franco-Japanese impressionism, was both beautiful and evocative. But it was the second-act set of a street above and the Café Momus below that took the prize: two levels, hundreds of extras, the whole scene a circus extravaganza dwarfing any conceivable human emotions and relationships. After this miracle of the designer's and carpenter's art, the death of Mimi in the finale seemed so much meaningless bustle, with actions and feelings being worked out on a relatively tiny and unimportant scale.

The Barber of Seville, seen in February in a new production by John Cox, also used the Met stage to maximum effect. This time the major attribute was the huge revolving platform (whose malfunction had contributed to the disastrous Met presentation of *Antony and Cleopatra*). Here, in Rossini's comparatively simple piece, several different settings appeared, as if by magic, in the course of a few minutes. Unfortunately, nothing musical came close to this level of virtuosity. Andrew Davis, the English conductor now in Toronto, led a performance which aimed at small-scale elegance and instead managed to be both lifeless and clumsy; the orchestral playing too was sloppy. Vocally the laurels went to Marilyn Horne, now secure the world over as a superstar. She gratified her fans, displaying remarkable agility in complicated passagework. The tenor singing Almaviva, in contrast, sang the opening *"Ecco ridente"* without making even an approach to the required florid style.

WITH five operas this season, Verdi was undeniably well represented. *La Traviata* and *Il Trovatore,* neither of them characteristic of Verdi's mature genius, received performances that were rewarding, like the curate's egg, in parts. The star in *Traviata* was the production, first seen here last season. The refined and elegant sets advanced the opera's action in time to post-1870 Paris. The resulting polish and sparkle, though attractive, seemed neither natural to the music nor radically new; everything appeared to belong more to the world of Strauss's *Arabella* than either to Verdi or to us. Catherine Malfitano sang Violetta in a soaring and attractive voice, employed to little dramatic purpose; Nicola Rescigno's conducting lacked bite and passion.

James Conlon's handling of *Tro-*

* This is no doubt a minority view: Levine has been engaged to make his Bayreuth debut this coming summer, conducting the 100th-anniversary performance of *Parsifal.*

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vatore, with Leontyne Price as a vocally commanding if sometimes uneven Leonora, was little better. In the past this talented conductor has shown an affinity for the less earthy Puccini. Here with Verdi he seemed to be attempting a curiously refined orchestral execution. The result most of the time was a loss of tension, and an opaque tone in the work's frequent climaxes. The stage direction too appeared to have gone sour; all too often the stage was populated by posed statues, not living actors.

Vastly more interesting was the new offering of *Così fan tutte*, which made its bow in late January. The sets were dazzling, the singing perky, and Levine's conducting was vibrant and, even more admirable, tightly controlled. In all it added up to a weighty, hearty Mozart, in some places sounding rather like Handel and in others like a Richard Strauss tribute to Mozart. But at least here, as in the earlier *Bohème*, one could see a new operatic style in the process of being born at the Met, a style suited, as perhaps it must be, to the huge expanse of the house and the newly large and largely new audience to which the Met is now catering. The fact that this style at its best is big, brilliant, and brittle may be compliment enough to some; to others it must inevitably seem the technologically efficient product of the conjunction of art and marketing.

Fidelio, seen at the end of March in its first performance this season, marked the podium debut at the Met of Bernard Haitink, the permanent conductor of the Amsterdam Concertgebouw and music director of the Glyndebourne Festival in England. Here, at last, was a great name at the helm, an experienced leader of international operatic productions and, to boot, a widely respected interpreter of Beethoven. The result was deeply disappointing, and not only because of the forced and tense vocal production of Shirley Verrett as the heroine Leonora and the wretched singing of tenor Edward Sooter as Florestan.

As so often happens at the Met, the performance failed in the pit. Again, orchestral playing was ragged; again, the conducting lacked drive, passion, and integration. The enthusiastic audience reaction to Haitink's performance of the famous *Leonore* Overture No. 3, between scenes one and two of Act II, made clear how far standards of interpretation and execution have slipped in contemporary musical life.

The season also included three concert performances. One, in February, was a Saturday matinee, also broadcast, of Verdi's *Requiem*, conducted by Levine and starring Leontyne Price; a second, in March, featured Tatiana Troyanos and Placido Domingo, with Levine conducting, in a program of vocal and orchestral excerpts; the third, again in March, not broadcast at the time, presented Marilyn Horne and Price, once more under Levine's baton. Concerts at the Met by company artists are hardly new, but this emphasis on them suggests a decision by management that opera production, being so clearly a financial loser, should and must be supported by every conceivable attempt to capitalize on the prestige and availability of stars—even at the cost of diluting and changing the public image of the company's mission.

The rest of the year, heard (except for *Die Zauberflöte*) on radio or seen, as in the case of *Il Trittico* and *Rigoletto*, on television, offered little to conflict with an in-house assessment. Crudely exciting conducting from Levine in *Norma* and *I Vespri Siciliani*; journeyman efforts from all concerned in *Tosca* and *Madame Butterfly*; a heavy *Tales of Hoffmann*; an unremarkable *Hansel and Gretel*: all these added to the impression of a season woefully deficient in precisely those qualities necessary, in the words of a Met radio commercial, to "dazzle the imagination."

THE verdict on the season just past must rather be one of a rude plenty in staple items and a tendency to substitute limited novelty for any real discovery at all. Orchestral standards did, on the whole, improve throughout the year from the low estate of the two *Ring* opera performances; as a rule the best orchestra playing came when Levine himself was conducting. Indeed, Levine is undoubtedly the best conductor now working at the Met on anything like a regular basis. His strengths as a musician are brisk confidence and a consistent ability to achieve lively performances. His defects are a general sameness of style in Italian music (generally his best) and the lack of an architectural sense in such weighty music as Wagner. It is easy to blame Levine for arrogating to himself the best conducting assignments and bringing too few outside names to the Met, but given the present worldwide dearth of conducting giants, such blame is perhaps misplaced.

Singing levels at the Met—at least apart from Wagner—seem adequate to sustain performances of major works. Though Levine himself has talked of the difficulties he faces in finding voices for such works as *Aida*, superstars like Domingo and Pavarotti, Horne and Sutherland (absent this year but returning the next), are still capable of thrilling large audiences. In any case, it hardly seems a tragedy that a few familiar works will retire from the repertory for a limited period of time.

The problem of Wagner is rather more serious. Here the Met is in trouble not just in voices. The conducting in these cornerstone works of the repertory is not now adequate for communicating them to an audience which has not been offered a full *Ring* since the 1974-75 season. When these operas return to the Met as a cycle, it must be in a new production taking account of the many changes in the staging of Wagner during the last generation. This is not necessarily to endorse such trendy manipulations of Wagner's original intentions as those perpetrated by Patrice Chéreau at Bayreuth in 1976, or even to agree with the kind of recomposition involved in Jean-Pierre Ponnelle's Met production of *Der Fliegende Holländer* a few seasons back. The point is not that any particular new production is good, or even that the new is better than the old. It is rather that in opera produc-

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tion, as in music itself, the essential greatness of the old can only be seen against the background of the new; this remains true even where new ventures can realistically promise little hope of wide success.

The Met's unwillingness to take risks is at its most striking in the matter of repertory. Next season, for example, contemporary music will be represented by a revival of the *Parade* triple bill. Elsewhere, the most modern-sounding work will be *Pelléas et Mélisande*. Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov* will return, as will Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier* and *Arabella*. Novelty will be represented by Francesco Cilea's *Adriana Lecouvreur* (1902). The great event of the season will be the Met premiere of Mozart's *Idomeneo*, written just over 200 years ago. As has become usual for the Met, nothing will be really new, and nothing, most assuredly, will be American.

ONE question can hardly be avoided. Given the Met's remarkable affluence, to what use is all this prosperity going to be put? In other times, the answer would have been simple: the business of a performing-arts institution is to put on the art of the day. Now the function of such an institution, as we have seen in the case of the Met, is museological. Indeed, such curatorial work is seen as the only course consistent with the survival of the institution itself.

This position of caretaker is one which connects the Met of Bliss and Levine with the earlier reign of Rudolf Bing. But what was acceptable in the late 1940's in New York is not so today. Then the New York City Opera was close to the beginning of its vanguard work in presenting native and imported works of the day. Now, however, the City Opera is weakened, unsure of its repertory, casting about for any possible means of continuing as a functioning enterprise. As a result the Met is more important in New York's cultural life (and, because of television, that of the country as well) than ever before. How will it choose to discharge its responsibilities?

Even on the level of survival, it is clear that the Met plays it safer than it might, and safer than other, not really dissimilar institutions, do. The San Francisco Opera, for example, has regularly put on new and controversial works; in the last few seasons these have included such chancy items as Shostakovich's erotically explicit *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* (1934), Luigi Dallapiccola's twelve-tone *Il Prigioniero* (1944-48), and Aribert Reimann's avant-garde *Lear* (1978). That such adventuresomeness is consistent with high-level performance of the standard repertory is shown by the recent extraordinary San Francisco productions of *Arabella* and Wagner's *Die Meistersinger*.

Clear as are the short-term benefits to the Met of following a cautious strategy, there are other, rather less pleasant, long-term effects. Even more than in the case of new art, the already famous requires freshness, vivacity, and the deeply felt illusion that each re-encounter is a pristine experience. To perform the same—or similar—works in the same way year after year is to become imitative and repetitive. To have no other place to find something new than in previously hidden parts of the old is to exaggerate minor discoveries and discrepancies and to run the risk of violating the one basic attribute of the old—its age. The matter can be simply put: without the new to stimulate digestion, the old loses its power to nourish. Here perhaps is the reason for the present vague mood of dissatisfaction with the Met now noticeable among audience and critics alike: where there is nothing to disagree with, there too is nothing to cherish.

GIVEN the present negative attitude toward new operatic and musical art, can one really require that the Met—or any other great performing institution—take remedial action in the almost certain knowledge that the happiest outcome will be no more than a *succès d'estime*, and that the far more likely outcome will be failure with both the press and the public? Can one, in other words, institutionalize risk-taking?

Here, precisely, there may well be a priceless opportunity for the Metropolitan Opera to defend and even enhance its unique private status and independence. By showing that a free-enterprise system in art can be just as innovative and creative as it has been in business and finance, the Met might counter the argument that only government support can assist the development of new art. The Met is rich enough to try; is it capitalist enough to pick up the challenge?

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Black Comedy

Richard Grenier

ARE we witnessing one of Thomas Sowell's examples of "ethnic succession" in American comedy today? It is hard to believe, given the personalities of the individual performers and the traits of the ethnic groups in question. But the most successful new movie comedy team by a huge margin is Cheech and Chong, who refer to themselves as "your typical Chinese-Mexican comedy team," and the most brilliant new solo performer is a black, Richard Pryor. They are smart, fast, funny. They are attracting giant audiences, and not vulgar audiences either. While Woody Allen was off trying to be, sadly, Ingmar Bergman (*Interiors*), Federico Fellini (*Stardust Memories*), and Tennessee Williams (*The Naked Light Bulb*), they have come streaking up on the outside and captured the market.

The size of the phenomenon is best indicated by comparing the commercial impact of the Woody Allen and the Cheech and Chong movies. Woody Allen comedies used to be very cheap to make. They never finished in the really big money, but they were unusually dependable. With the exception of one close call (*Love and Death*), they all turned a handsome profit. Allen's most successful movie to date was *Manhattan* in 1979, when for one heady month a Woody Allen movie led the field in the entire country. By the time the returns were in at the end of the year, however, *Manhattan* had sunk to 19. (*Stardust Memories*, at $26 million an expensive fiasco, only reached 80.) Cheech and Chong movies are even cheaper to make than the old Woody Allen movies. The team has done three films—*Up in Smoke*, *Cheech and Chong's Next Movie*, and *Nice Dreams*—and ended up in about the top dozen every time. Their first picture topped Burt Reynolds; their second picture topped Robert Redford; their third topped Paul Newman. Hollywood is staggering; slovenly little cheapies that bring out mobs like James Bond?

There is nothing obscure about the novelty of Cheech and Chong's material. They are the comics of dope. What booze was to W.C. Fields, narcotics are to Cheech and Chong. Before W. C. Fields, of course, alcohol had been around for a long time. Every comedian—every actor—could do a drunk routine. On the other hand, narcotics, comedically speaking, were brand new, with exciting new oddities of social behavior just waiting to be parodied by entertainers of sufficient wit and talent. For a long time Cheech and Chong were too hot for the movies or even late-night television to handle. The country attentively followed the adventures of *Saturday Night Live*'s Not Ready for Prime Time Players (very few of whose alumni, notably Bill Murray and the late John Belushi, were to become major film stars). But Cheech and Chong were deemed not ready—not only for prime time, but for any kind of television. Only the record industry would touch them. Platinum record followed platinum record, finally Paramount Pictures took a flyer, and the studios haven't stopped counting the money.

Why the comics of dope should be a Los Angeles Chicano and a half-Chinese Canadian from Vancouver is not without its note of mystery, although it does somehow seem appropriate that their chosen stamping ground is the area of Los Angeles. (In the opening scene of their last film they are selling marijuana from an ice-cream van near the beach in Santa Monica.) Properly speaking, their material is not heavily "ethnic," but Cheech being a Chicano does make a link between the affluent world of the area's "West Side" (Beverly Hills, Bel-Air, Brentwood, Westwood, Santa Monica, Pacific Palisades) and the "low-riders" of East Los Angeles—the *boue* (primeval mud) for which the druggies of the West Side perhaps feel a *nostalgie*. Both Cheech and Chong personally, it might be worth noting, live perfectly quiet lives.

RICHARD PRYOR's success has also been very great. *Stir Crazy*, in which he co-starred with Gene Wilder, was the third biggest money-maker of 1981, behind *Raiders of the Lost Ark* and *Superman II*, while his latest one-man "concert" movie, *Richard Pryor Live on the Sunset Strip*, took in $8 million in its first three days, more money than *Missing* made in a month, than Diane Keaton's *Shoot the Moon* in two months. Given their talents and their box-office power, both Cheech and Chong and Pryor (at least until recently in the latter case) have been decidedly underreported in the prestige press compared to Woody Allen, for example, who has long been its darling. It may be that the concentration of a large Jewish population in New York, center of the country's communications industry, has something to do with this. But it is also quite obvious that Allen, despite his often repeated declarations of disdain for intellectuals and of admiration for athletes, craves the approval of the intellectual community desperately. You can see it in his material (with his by now thoroughly tired references to Freud and Kierkegaard), his pathetic aping of Bergman and Fellini, his appearances at *vernissages* at the Guggenheim and Museum of Modern Art and such events as an hom-

RICHARD GRENIER *writes about movies regularly for* COMMENTARY.

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age to Martha Graham, and even where he eats—which is every night at Elaine's, not known as a hangout for wide receivers for the New York Jets. And it has worked. Up until he abandoned comedy for lower things (he will soon be back), Woody Allen was the New York para-intellectual world's favorite comic. And he has just recently even hit Paris, where *l'humeur juive* is positively the latest thing.

But if Woody Allen has assiduously sought the approval of the New York "intellectual" set, Cheech, Chong, and Richard Pryor —who have spent most of their time in the land of the orange blossom—have not. This has not stopped them from attaining great prestige in the entertainment world, particularly Pryor, who is a kind of black comedian we have never had before.

In his private life, Richard Pryor has been what he himself would once have called "one crazy nigger." In fact, although he has sworn to give up using that term of racial abuse, his biggest, huge-selling platinum record was named, no doubt by himself, *That Nigger's Crazy*.

Born in 1940 in Peoria, Illinois, he is the son, he has often said, of a prostitute. If untrue, this is not everyone's notion of snob appeal. As a result of what his lawyer called a "syndrome of irresponsibility," he has been convicted of assaulting a motel desk clerk (who was awarded $75,000 in damages), of failure to file income tax (he was fined and spent ten days in jail), not to mention possession of marijuana. He has had numerous wives, "four, five, six . . . eight, I don't remember," and during a fight with one of them on New Year's Day 1978, he shot a Buick full of holes with a .357 Magnum. He has set a girlfriend's mink coat on fire, gotten into fist fights with co-stars Yaphet Kotto and Harvey Keitel on the set of *Blue Collar*, stabbed a fellow soldier while serving with a U.S. airborne division in Germany, and has been involved in numerous other legal difficulties and lawsuits, has sued and been sued, for child support among other things (he has four children). The Aladdin Hotel in Las Vegas dismissed him in the middle of an engagement in 1967 for obscenities he allegedly directed at the audience.

But the most spectacular event in what was already a highly erratic life occurred in June 1980, when, in a freak drug- or alcohol-related accident, Pryor almost burned himself to death. There is some controversy as to the accident's circumstances. Pryor announced he was suing his former business manager for spreading a report that he was burned in an explosion while freebasing cocaine. ("Freebasing" is the process of refining street cocaine, sometimes with ether, to produce the pure "freebase," which is then smoked in a pipe. The smoking is also called "freebasing.") Pryor openly admits, however, that he was once a heavy cocaine user, and drank a fifth of liquor a day. He also told *Ebony* magazine that he had been "freebasing" for three days before the accident. But he had run out of cocaine, he said, and switched to "151-proof rum," and when he tried to light a cigarette with a butane lighter the rum caught on fire.

The genteel nicety that distinguishes catching on fire while freebasing cocaine from catching on fire from 151-proof rum after three days of freebasing cocaine was further confused when he used the whole freebasing incident as material for perhaps one quarter of his new film, *Richard Pryor Live on the Sunset Strip*. "Ten million people freebasin' in this country," he cries in exasperation. "Who ever heard anybody burnin' up! *Why me?*" What his lawyers think of this, I have no idea.

But Richard Pryor is clearly a far more complex person than his wild living would suggest. Strangely, he has always considered himself religious. "I was meant to be Catholic," he said to one reporter, and told another, "I see God in the streets. He *is* in me and around me." On the most terrifying night of his life, as he raced down the street on which he lived in Los Angeles, his upper body covered with third-degree burns, in agony, crazed, he was heard to cry, "There's some good in me!" and to appeal to someone not to let him die. "There's no doubt about it," said an observer. "He was talking to God." And he continued to talk to God through six weeks at the Sherman Oaks Community Hospital Burn Center, where, although it was a very close call (doctors gave him only one chance in three of surviving), the staff, his friends, and perhaps God pulled him through. "It took me all this time to find out it was okay to be me," he said recently. "I was given another chance at life."

Not entirely unpredictably, he has been rushing around doing good deeds. Last summer he donated $200,000 and served as peacemaker in attempts to bring an end to feuds among 30 youth gangs in black districts of Los Angeles, and gave $50,000 to charities in his home town of Peoria for people "regardless of race, creed, or color," with a portion set aside to fight drug abuse. He has denounced drugs vehemently and gone to live in a one-bedroom home in Maui with a commanding view of the Hawaiian coastline. "When I first saw this place again, I cried," he says. "I thanked God for letting me live to see it."

If all this seems too much like a caricature of the reformed sinner, as if Richard Pryor were going to devote his life henceforth to good works and to God, I can only say that he doesn't seem to be showing Him his comedy material. At least he hasn't been showing it to any of His earthly representatives. For it is more foul-mouthed and blasphemous than ever. Every man, I suppose, serves God in his own way.

If Richard Pryor has been disreputable in life, there have been disreputable elements in his career as well. A distinguished black jazz musician who played with Pryor many years ago remembers him even then as having "the dirtiest mouth in show business." When he got out of the U.S. Army, where he appeared in amateur shows, Pryor began to play small clubs in Peoria, East Saint Louis, and Buffalo. In 1963, the success of the black comedian Bill Cosby tempted him to try New York. In Greenwich Village and the Catskills he in time became known as "the black Lenny Bruce," for, somewhat ironically,

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the one thing he was destined never to become was another Bill Cosby. As his fame grew in the mid-60's, a member of the white show-business establishment actually advised Pryor in so many words to be "more like Bill Cosby," meaning "the kind of colored guy we'd like to have over to our house," but this was an option that never seemed open to Pryor.

It should be remembered that both Cosby and Dick Gregory were black men of a completely different sort from Pryor, psychologically as well as socially. Both had been to college. Both were star athletes. Cosby had such a high IQ that he was placed in a school for gifted children, and later played halfback on the Temple University football team. No one who qualifies for a school for gifted children and could have played professional football for the Green Bay Packers can be under the illusion that he is an inferior person. When Cosby and Gregory met the white man, they met him on his own terms.

It is interesting that neither of them—each departing in his own direction—remained "black comedians." In 1963, just as Pryor was leaving for New York inspired by Cosby's success, Cosby himself completely dropped all racial material from his performances, and, two years later, in *I Spy*, he became the first black to co-star (with Robert Culp) in a weekly dramatic television series—a series in which the fact that he was black played no part at all, at least in the plot. As for Gregory, although he certainly remained "black," he gave up being a comedian entirely, fasting, marching, protesting, devoting himself to radical politics.

WHILE Dick Gregory was fasting ascetically, Richard Pryor, who dropped out of school at fourteen, became an ever-heavier user of cocaine. "Aw, man, like I bought Peru, you know?" Three years after being dismissed by the Aladdin in Las Vegas for obscenity, and given another chance at the same Aladdin in 1970, trying to restrain his language, Pryor suddenly "went crazy" and stormed off the stage in mid-act. A "street nigger" he was born, it seemed (the expression is his own), and a "street nigger" he would die. He would not meet the white man on the white man's terms.

For a time it looked as if Richard Pryor might lose in this test of wills. When he returned to Hollywood, where he had made his first film in 1967 with Sid Caesar, he was confined for some years to what were then called "black-exploitation" movies—which is to say movies destined for an almost completely black audience. And when the bottom dropped out of black-exploitation in the mid-70's, he was left with only records, "concert" performances (heavily attended by blacks), and odd appearances on television (as a guest star with Lily Tomlin and Flip Wilson). He even wrote scripts for television's *Sanford and Son*. But the times were changing. Many of the shifts in mores popularly attributed to the 60's actually took place in the 70's, and a change in the attitude toward Richard Pryor was one of them.

In 1970 Richard Pryor was not considered acceptable entertainment for a white audience, but by 1976 he was. In that year he was offered a starring role in his first film intended for white or mixed audiences in almost a decade. *Silver Streak*, with Gene Wilder as co-star, was a great financial success, and Pryor has never looked back, reigning for the last five or six years as the world's leading black entertainer.

Interestingly, now that white society has accepted him, Pryor has adopted an at least partly conciliating attitude toward white society, as we shall soon see. Whether this is a simple gesture of reciprocity, or prudent calculation, or the result of some long-delayed maturity, or even because Richard Pryor has literally "been through the fire" and heard God's voice, it would be hard to know.

AS WITH Cheech and Chong, Pryor's success on records (*That Nigger's Crazy, Is It Something I Said?, Bicentennial Nigger*—all three won Grammies) played a large role in the turnaround. The markets for the huge U.S. record industry and for Hollywood movies overlap heavily. White people were buying Richard Pryor records. And the movie producers took it from there. Pryor has been vindicated in more than the mountain-coming-to-Muhammad sense in that audiences are getting a rarer and funnier Richard Pryor than they would have gotten if he had accepted the advice of his well-wishers in Las Vegas in the mid-60's. "I was a robot," he now says of his early efforts. "Beep. Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to the Sands Hotel. The maids here are funny. Beep." And really, the prime Richard Pryor, in my view the unique Richard Pryor, is the one we get when he plays in solo performance as himself.

One of the conspicuous distinctions among even great comic actors is that some of them (the late Peter Sellers was an example) feel awkward and self-conscious when called upon to appear in their own *personae* and need to be assigned a "character" (not themselves) to be at their best. Pryor is the opposite. When playing comic roles in his movie comedies with Gene Wilder, he is skillful, capable, funny. At serious moments, like so many great comic actors before him, he tends to go sentimental. But when he is "himself" (although there is plainly much artistic license) there is none of that.

As a solo performer, Pryor has done all America's best "gigs"—sold-out performances to enthusiastic houses at the Kennedy Center in Washington, Lincoln Center in New York, the Shubert in Los Angeles. His first opportunity to be himself on film was in 1972 in *Wattstax*, the movie version of the concert staged in the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum by Stax Records for the benefit of the black community of Watts. Pryor did monologues that linked together the other acts. But by 1979, when he did his first solo movie, *Richard Pryor Live in Concert*, he was in a wholly different world.

Significantly, he chose to give this concert performance in Long Beach, a city in the vicinity of Los Angeles that used to be known as "Iowa by the Sea," and with reason. There is hardly a black face to be seen for miles around. Here he was, the "Bicentennial Nigger," playing for a white audience. It was noticed that,

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although he did (wonderful) imitations of white people, Pryor used no derogatory terms for whites, and that the black man was shown less as a victim than had been Pryor's wont in the past. His language was as foul as ever, however, and blacks were almost invariably referred to as "niggers." All the material came from his own life—no doubt heightened. He told of boxing ingloriously as a young man in the Golden Gloves ("I had to fight these niggers [who] looked as if they just murdered their parents") and of, quite logically, it seemed, shooting this Buick while in a rage at his wife.

The following year came his near-fatal accident, when he "went through the fire," and now he has come back to us again in *Richard Pryor Live on the Sunset Strip,* with even more marked changes in social orientation. "Nigger" is gone, but so is Pryor's papal indulgence for all black misbehavior. He mousetraps the audience several times. He is anti-crime, and he is anti-black crime. Black solidarity isn't what it used to be either. "I trusted him because he was a brother," Pryor says. "Well, the brother took me hook, line, and sinker. And on dry land."

But I must explain Pryor's method.

Richard Pryor plays himself as a glorified id, a kind of Id Rampant. The character we are presented with on stage is feckless, foul-mouthed, profligate, promiscuous. He takes dope, drinks, is totally incapable of what psychologists call "deferred gratification," as if he had just stepped out of the pages of *Civilization and Its Discontents.* He tires of women as rapidly as he takes up with them, is never in control of his emotions, is continually swept away by irrepressible desires for immediate pleasure, by frustration, exasperation, fear, rage. The antagonists in his stories (often white, or female, or both) are always calm, cool, self-possessed, while Pryor is in a state of high excitement and agitation, in a frenzy of desire for a woman, for example, who is telling him in a genteel, white voice, "Richard, please, don't do this to yourself." Either that or, having to look at the same face over the breakfast table every morning, he becomes totally bored with her. "Why don't you take a vacation for a year!" "Yeah, I can't sustain a relationship," he says. "That's what they say these days, I can't sustain a relationship."

In short, Richard Pryor, on stage, plays the very caricature of the irresponsible black man, the embodiment of almost every single stereotypical trait that traditionally consigned him to the bottom of the country's social order. But he transcends the character. We have had Stepin Fetchit and Butterfly McQueen playing seemingly bona-fide black idiots. We have had Bill Cosby and Dick Gregory "talking white" to white audiences. (We have even had Flip Wilson and Redd Foxx, amiable but insignificant black comics—neither here nor there.) But Richard Pryor for the first time has taken the "black" character at its socially most regressive, and made us laugh in a new way—as if behind this performance is a high intelligence.

I must warn the reader about Pryor's language. He uses "motherf—er" as synonymous with "guy," and to the virtual exclusion of "guy." He also uses it extensively in direct address—with "Jack" as a less frequent variant, and "man" even less frequently. Some might consider this practice a symbol of an ultimate breakdown in civility or respect for language, but this is not my opinion. Plainly the character Richard Pryor is portraying would not feel authentic to him if he did not use such terms—and for me, at least, the words have no shock value whatever, even striking me as the natural vernacular for the character and the perfect foil for his composed, lucid, decorous antagonists. One of Pryor's most wonderful scenes is one in which he reenacts fights with his wife. The wife in question is white, and his recreation of her voice is exquisite: not only white and female, but complacent, refined: "Richard, you really should learn to get in touch with your emotions." It is interesting that in the works of so many male writers and artists it is women who are emotional, "high-strung," but in the world of Richard Pryor *he* is the one subject to uncontrollable emotions, and women are "cool." Also cool are white people, even Mafia night-club operators ("Cold! That motherf—er's face was so cold! Damn! I'd love to have a face like that!"). Lawyers are cool, even black lawyers, who speak excellent English. Lawyer (with exaggerated aplomb): "Don't . . . worry. You are . . . only . . . facing . . . ten years . . . in the penitentiary. . . . [after the laugh] That will be $40,000." Pryor: "Forty thousand *dollars*! I just *met* you."

One of the most curious things in the film is the voice in which Pryor's cocaine-freebase pipe speaks to him, seductively, in the sequence in which he reenacts his cocaine addiction. This pipe-voice, too, is educated, almost white, speaks calmly, kindly, in impeccable English: "Come into the room, Rich. We'll have a nice chat. Spend a few months." In this comic psychodrama, with Pryor as id, it is only natural that the reasoning intellect should be white, or near-white. Of course, the calm, educated voice shows how reasonably such a debilitating addiction can present itself. But I am tempted by the notion that, for Richard Pryor, the calm, educated, "white" voice might always be, to some degree, the voice of the Serpent.

Yet very early in the film we begin to see that Richard Pryor has shifted some of his social attitudes. He describes how he and Gene Wilder, to make *Stir Crazy,* spent some time at New Mexico State Penitentiary. The first joke is predictable. Some 80 percent of the convict population is black, "which is funny, you know, because there's no black people in New Mexico. I think they bus 'em in!" This gets a good laugh. But then Pryor says he thought he'd get to know some of the "brothers," and depicts his growing alarm as it dawns on him just what kind of brothers these are. "But why did you kill *everybody* in the house?" Answer (superbland): "Well, they was *home.*" At which point Pryor cries, "Thank God for penitentiaries!" (Huge laugh.) "You know, I used to think black people killed people by *accident,* but these motherf—ers is murderers! He doin' triple life! He

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come back to earth, they say to him, 'Get your little ass out of kindergarten. Back to penitentiary!'" He describes the different gangs in prison, the white Nazis, and "the Mexican gangs you can't pronounce the names," but devotes most of his loving attention to the blacks. "There's the Black Panthers, the Black Muslims, the Double Muslims. You watch out for them *Double* Muslims. They can't get into *heaven* 'less they take twelve motherf—ers *with* 'em." This is a long way from the Richard Pryor who a few years ago was saying, "You want to find *justice* in prison? That's what you'll find, *just us.*" We have come quite a distance from the black as pure victim of white society.

It is worth seeing Richard Pryor just for his imitations of white people, his impressions of Italian Americans in this film being particularly eerie. Most Americans of Anglo-Saxon or Northern European descent probably think of Italians and Italian Americans as hot-blooded, more given to feeling, perhaps even passion. But not Richard Pryor. To Pryor they are cold. Oh, he sees the surface expressiveness, the touching, the cheek-chubbing. "They like to hug you," he says, hugging the microphone in the crook of his elbow. "Hey, you got family? You got family now." But he senses underneath this the white man's self-discipline, self-control—in the case of the Mafia, murderous self-control. He does a line or two from *The Godfather*. "Hey, could you guys let me off for old time sake?" And the answer: a relentless shaking of the head. "So *cold*!" moans Pryor. "God, damn!"

But no doubt the high point of the film is the sequence taken from his own life, the cocaine addiction, the horrible accident, the hospital, the burn-care center. A man who can lift an experience like this to the highest level of humor has a gift.

Pryor swears to tell the audience the truth about the episode. As everybody knows, every night before he goes to bed he has warm milk and cookies. And one night as he was standing by the stove warming his special blend of pasteurized whole milk and low-fat milk, he touched the mixture with his cookie, "and the shit blew up!" A moment later Pryor is wheeling along, talking about freebasing. The story of his addiction is a kind of masterpiece. There are the duologues between himself and the pipe, the pipe soothing, seductive: "Come on into the room, Rich. I understand." Later more severe: "You let me get *down* the other day, Rich. I . . . don't . . . like . . . that." When his friend Jim Brown, the former football player, tries to break him of the habit, the pipe replies suavely: "Rich. Don't . . . listen. Where were they when you needed them?"

Describing his behavior immediately after the accident, Pryor says, "You know, when you runnin' down the street on fire, people get out of your way real quick." This from a man who was burned over 60 percent of his body. He stared death in the eye, suffered excruciating agony, and has come back chipper and cheeky. The man's got something. It goes without saying that all the lines I have quoted would have been mere dross in the hands of an uninspired performer. But Pryor has split-second timing, a fabulous gift of mimicry. He changes in and out of character in the blink of an eye. There is a wild and original intelligence at work.

Now, critics have agreed almost from the start that Richard Pryor's material is basically "serious," so I hope I will be forgiven if I subject his trip to Africa—also narrated in the new film—to a modest analysis to discover what he is telling us about Africa, and about race. Pryor's first reaction on arriving in Africa is, "Somebody in my family's been lyin' to me!," meaning that he is part white. For an instant I envisaged a road which he just might take if he wanted to. But he does not take it. He carries on for a bit like a stereotype Zionist in Israel: "Everybody black! From the winos to the president!" He describes the jungle: "Tarzan wouldn't last a week!" And he does wonderful imitations of animals: "Them cheetahs is fast!" There are appeals to black pride, some of them based on the fossil discoveries of the Doctors Leakey: "We was the first people on the face of the earth to say: *Where the f— am I? . . . And how do you get to Detroit?*"

I felt Pryor's nerve distinctly failing him, however, when he told a story about giving a lift to a bad-smelling "tribesman." Pryor does a marvelous imitation of himself being attacked by an evil smell, but ends the sketch with the tribesman asking to be let off because *he* can't stand the smell of Pryor's eau de cologne. Now internal evidence suggests that the African country he probably visited was Kenya, which attracts many tourists, lured by its variegated wildlife, protected in the vast Tsavo National Park. If indeed it was Kenya, the "tribesman" would have been one of the famous Masai, a great East African warrior tribe whose members are particularly resistant to modern cultural changes and (as any middle-class black in Nairobi will happily explain to you) smell really awful. The notion of a Masai hitchhiker so offended by the smell of eau de cologne that he asks to be let off is not only impossible, and unfunny; it is pious.

But the crown of Pryor's "African" section is its conclusion. Pryor says to himself, "Well, you been here all this time. You seen any niggers?" And the answer is no: "There are no niggers in Africa!" Pryor has been thinking about it, he says. Racism is ugly, and he's not going to say "nigger" any more. "There," he says to the audience. "You can take that away with you."

One can understand perfectly easily that the existence of black sovereign states in Africa has been very important to American blacks' self-esteem. Black presidents, black commanders-in-chief, black everything. But there has developed the widespread notion in the U.S. black community that Africa is some kind of black Garden of Eden. No "niggers" in Africa? Africa has blacks far more persecuted than any in America, and by other blacks. If Richard Pryor is as "serious" as they say, and as concerned with "justice" as he says himself, it might interest him to find out about Africa some day.

Africa is tribal. As black American friends who have made the at-

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tempt to enter African society have always stressed to me, if you don't have a tribe in Africa your skin color doesn't make much difference. These tribes do not treat each other as "brothers." Indeed, they are rather given to massacring one another. Does Pryor know that more than a million Ibos died in Biafra's war for independence, fought because the Ibos felt they were persecuted by Nigeria's dominant tribes, notably the Hausa and the Yoruba?

Even aside from the tribal question, African states are not democracies. They are governed by tiny ruling elites. Class lines are fierce. Every single black country in Africa has a derogatory term for its backward "bush" people. If you are not within the small circle of power in these countries, the means for redress of grievance are slim. I could remind Richard Pryor of the states in Africa which have recently had the misfortune of being ruled by mad tyrants (Equatorial Guinea, the Central African Republic, Uganda), but I would prefer to offer him the example of the little country of Burundi, population four million, just some 250 miles across Lake Victoria from where he might have been in Kenya. Most of the population are Bantu-speaking Hutus (85 percent), and these Hutus had pretty much the run of Burundi until they were conquered in about the 15th century by the Tutsi (14 percent), who invaded from the northeast and established themselves as a master race. The Tutsi and the Hutu have a lord-to-serf relationship, which works well enough, I suppose, except now and then when the Hutu get restive and the Tutsi, regretfully, have to put a few to death. The last time this happened was in 1972, when the Washington *Post* sent a reporter to cover the story. He estimated that the Tutsi had just killed some 200,000 Hutus. The *People's Almanac* (hardly a right-wing publication) records that in the first six weeks 100,000 Hutus were massacred.

WELL, Richard Pryor has gone to live on Maui. He jogs, starts each day with a health drink of fresh fruit, yogurt, and eggs, offers visitors unfiltered apple juice. I would feel less nervous about him if he at least drank *filtered* apple juice. In his very latest movie, *Some Kind of Hero*, which followed *Richard Pryor Live on the Sunset Strip* by only three weeks, he plays a returned prisoner of war from Vietnam. Half comedy, half sentimental melodrama, the film has little distinction beyond its evident desire to create sympathy for the men who fought in Vietnam for their country. But this itself is not without significance, and the movie has opened strongly at the nation's box offices. Pryor, meanwhile, has donated all the proceeds from the picture's world premiere to the Foundation for Burn Research. "I gotta do something for the money they pay me," Pryor told an interviewer anxiously a few months ago. "I want to make people think."

To "make people think" is a noble aspiration. But there are the Hutu, the Tutsi, the Masai, the Hausa, the Yoruba, the Ibo, and many, many more. Richard Pryor must do some thinking himself. In the meantime, an unlikely combination of suffering, prudence, and God seems to have moved him some steps in the right direction.

Fiction

Why John Irving Is So Popular

Joseph Epstein

"AMBUSHING a Best-Seller" is the title Edmund Wilson gave to a 1945 review of a novel by Anya Seton, but clearly it is too late to ambush the novelist John Irving, who has already ridden into town, cleaned out the banks, and ridden out again unharmed. After publishing three novels, Irving rang the bestseller gong, and rang it with a sledgehammer, with his fourth, *The World According to Garp*, and then rang it yet again with his fifth and most recent novel, *The Hotel New Hampshire*.* These books have not been bestsellers merely but thunderous bestsellers. Three-and-a-half million paperback copies sold of *The World According to Garp*, weeks and weeks atop the bestseller lists for *The Hotel New Hampshire*, *Garp* soon to be a movie. . . .

Yet all this is matter best left to the accountants. What is more interesting, what distinguishes John Irving's recent novels from the

JOSEPH EPSTEIN *is the editor of the* American Scholar. *His books include* Familiar Territory *and* Ambition.

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regular run of even thunderous bestsellers, is that they are not books meant for entertainment alone. They are written out of serious intentions, and by and large they are read in a serious way by their varied audience. My sense is that this audience is fairly youthful, Irving's readers ranging preponderantly between their early forties and their early twenties, though not exclusively so.

John Irving's admirers take his novels seriously, he most certainly takes them seriously, but how seriously ought serious people to take them? Fifty million Frenchmen can't be wrong, they used to say before the establishment of the Vichy government; can five or six million American readers of John Irving? Of course they can, and over questions of serious art large audiences generally are wrong. Yet they need not necessarily be. Right or wrong, however, the wide readership for John Irving's novels—mainly youthful, mainly middle class—is itself a phenomenon worth considering in its own right. But before considering the phenomenon of Irving's commercial success, let us consider the products that made the success a phenomenon—the novels themselves

"Jubilant" is the word Mordecai Richler used to describe the quality of John Irving's talent. "America's most jubilant bestseller" reads the blurb atop the paperback edition of *Garp*. Jubilation, surely, is one of the effects Irving seeks as a novelist—a sense of joyousness, of exultation. Fittingly, he is a high-energy writer, who works in heavy brushstrokes, goes in for colorful effects, does not write the kind of careful novel in which, as Virginia Woolf once said of the novels of Jane Austen, "one slip means death."

In the contemporary novel, jubilation also implies comedy, comedy of a somewhat manic kind, and Irving, from the very beginning of his career, has been a comedian. The character T. S. Garp says, "Why did people insist that if you were 'comic' you couldn't also be 'serious'?" I am not sure that many people do insist this, for it is fairly common knowledge that there is a comedy that is at bottom highly serious. More about the quality of John Irving's comedy presently, but for now let it suffice to say that, as with the work of so many contemporary American novelists—Pynchon and Barthelme, Elkin and Roth, Coover and Barth—Irving's is riddled, is fairly bristling, with comic scenes.

Sex, too, is central to the Irving novel. Fancy fornication in one form or another is never far off in any of John Irving's novels, and it ranges from adolescent sex to lesbian love to couple-swapping to incest. Fellatio in a car, both moving and parked, is another Irving *spécialité de la maison*. Comedy and sex often combine, and the result is generally scenes that are frenzied, hysterical, madcap, shading into slapstick in which lust leads to an Irving hero being caught *in flagrante delicto*. The centrality of sex in these novels is curious, in that Irving often goes well out of his way to make plain his hatred of the sexual exploitation of women and his sympathy for the general tendency of their liberation from the old regime under which, presumably, women were treated as sexual objects. More than one of John Irving's novels manages to be both liberationist and pornographic. But then sex is perhaps the only one of life's activities where one can eat one's cake and have it, too.

The physical side of life generally gets a great deal of play in the novels of John Irving. Sweat, secretions, smells, bumps, lumps, rumps—all come in for their share of descriptive prose. Although Irving is fecund in imagining incidents for his characters to run through, it is apparently a bit more difficult for him not to create a narrator or at least one principal character who is, as they say in the locker room, "in shape." Wrestling, running, weightlifting, physical conditioning of one strenuous sort or another is, in a way that is not quite made explicit, connected to spiritual conditioning. But then perhaps the joggers of our day do not need to have the connection made any more explicit.

One needs to be in a certain shape oneself to read a John Irving novel; rather a strong stomach, specifically, is required for the violence that is integral to his novels. Characters are set upon by bears and other wild animals; body parts drop off people with a more than fair regularity; bombings and rapes are provided; a character from Irving's first novel, *Setting Free the Bears*, meets his death through suffocation in a pit of human excrement, and he, mind you, is a sympathetic character. In a notorious scene in *Garp*, a car crash results in the loss of the following human inventory: one child, the eye of another, and one penis. But this is lyrical stuff compared with another scene in the same novel in which (in the course of a story within the larger story) a man is disemboweled while committing a rape. John Irving is not unaware of the heavy dosage of violence in his novels, and in his latest, *The Hotel New Hampshire*, his narrator remarks of the book's ending, "I know it's not nearly violent enough to please some of the friends and foes from our past. . . ."

IT WAS only with the fourth of his novels, *The World According to Garp*, that John Irving began to talk thus to his readers, to refer to his own works within his works. Roughly three-quarters of the way through *Garp*, for example, Garp, the narrator, tells us that he is planning to write a novel called *My Father's Illusions*, which turns out to be not the title but one of the principal themes of Irving's next novel, *The Hotel New Hampshire*. In *Garp*, too, the narrator is supposed to have written an earlier novel entitled *The Second Wind of the Cuckold*. Irving never wrote such a novel, though the phrase—"If cuckolds catch a second wind, I am eagerly waiting for mine"—is found embedded in the last line of Irving's previous novel, *The 158-Pound Marriage*. One autobiographical parallel follows another in Irving's recent novels, and these are often followed by little sermonettes about the need to disregard "shitty autobiographical associations that make those rabid readers of gossip warm to an occasional fiction." And again: "Usually, with great patience and restraint, Garp would say that the autobiographical basis—if there ever was one—was the least interesting level on which to read a novel." Setting down a rug, then pulling it out from under a reader, this

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is what academic literary critics, who are infinitely patient men and women, like to call novelistic playfulness.

Although no doubt Irving would detest the notion, there is a strong sense in which he is an academic novelist. He is a former student at the University of Iowa Program in Creative Writing, and while you can take the boy out of the Program in Creative Writing you can't always take the Program in Creative Writing out of the boy. Two of Irving's five novels—*The Water-Method Man* and *The 158-Pound Marriage*—have academic settings. But more is involved than scenes and settings. In the very first of Irving's novels, *Setting Free the Bears*, which has to do with freeing the animals from the Hietzinger Zoo in Vienna, one already senses certain school-learned touches, bits, ironies. Having set a good part of this novel during World War II, Irving has one of his characters remark late in the novel, that his teacher, a Jew, "was enraged that I should be so pretentious as to dash through the war with so little mention of the Jews. I tried to explain that he should really look at my autobiography as what is loosely called fiction—a novel, say." Irving often goes in for these Chinese-box effects —characters are writing books or shooting films within his books—and this game-playing, rather than telling a story straight out, is one of the standard marks of the academic novelist at work.

More important than John Irving's academic roots, however, is that his writing seems very much of a special generation. In *Setting Free the Bears*, Siegfried, the hero of the novel, who in 1967 is twenty-one years old, remarks: "What I mean is, we're at an interim age at an interim time; we're alive between two times of monstrous decisions—one past, the other coming." This quotation may make John Irving seem a political writer, but he isn't, at least not in any obvious or direct way. What he is, I think, is a generational writer—a writer attractive to readers of a certain age. It is the young—or rather the youngish—to whom he appeals. His novels exert their greatest pull on those people who are undecided about growing up; they are college-educated, getting on and even getting up in the world, but with a bit of the hippie-dippie counterculture clinging to them still—yuppies, they have been called, the initials YUP standing for young urban professionals. A friend who is a professor at my university's law school, for instance, recently told me that many of the younger law professors among his colleagues are nuts about the novels of John Irving. Not that this constitutes a CBS/New York *Times* poll, but I have never before heard of young law professors being nuts about any novelist. Why? What's the attraction?

IRVING's second novel, *The Water-Method Man*, is about a graduate student in German at the University of Iowa, who only reluctantly accepts the roles of huband and father. Fred "Bogus" Trumper is his name, extreme passivity his game. The passive hero, or hero as passive, has by now become a tradition of sorts in contemporary American fiction. We have had a Dangling Man and an Invisible Man, and to these Irving adds a Water-Method Man. The title refers to a method of treatment that the novel's hero undergoes for the difficulty he has in urinating: drinking lots and lots of water. *The Water-Method Man* is the most convoluted of Irving's novels—his hero is doing a translation of an old German epic for his dissertation, while at the same time a documentary film is being made of his life—and also easily the most boring. A great many little academic games are being played out in it: dead ducks appear, people sleep with tropical fish tanks around them, the hero retells the story of *Moby Dick* to his child—in short, there is plenty of symbolism to go around.

Certain elements appear in the pages of *The Water-Method Man* that will be hallmarks in John Irving's novels to come: the broad joke is carried a bit beyond much too far (the squeamish are advised to pass up the urological jokes and horror stories that run throughout); the rather persistent dropping off of human body parts begins in earnest; the hero turns out to be a wrestler; the main characters arrive, as they invariably do in an Irving novel, in Vienna; adorable children appear who must be protected from the world's cruelty; and, finally, there is a celebration of the flesh (the last clause in the novel reads, "Bogus Trumper smiled cautiously at all the good flesh around him"). And, too, as with all of Irving's novels, whatever the suffering and death that have gone before, the ending is somehow upbeat. But then wasn't it William Dean Howells who said that what the American public wanted was above all a tragedy with a happy ending?

The 158-Pound Marriage is Irving's best-formed novel. Its subject is wife- and husband-swapping, with an occasional bout of *ménage à quatre* and a single detour into lesbianism. Of the four principals, two are writers, one a teacher and wrestling coach, one an Austrian brought up by a captain of the army of the USSR during the occupation of Vienna. It is the most sex-ridden of Irving's novels, even though at one point its narrator says that "sex is only a temporary cure." In the pages of *The 158-Pound Marriage* it has to do until something better comes along. Nothing better does. Reading this novel one is inclined to agree with one of the two wives, who, near the close, remarks, "I think we were just *f—ers*!" Something new has been added for the first time in Irving's work, an element that will henceforth appear in all his novels; for the first time discussions of fiction appear in the middle of his fiction. "Edith and I agreed," the narrator says, "that when the subject of fiction became how to write fiction, we lost interest. . . ."

Mutilation of various kinds continues in *The 158-Pound Marriage*. Men without legs, a man with a hole in his face, a dancer with a part of her foot missing supply some of the novel's notable subtractions; children are also wounded in a blood-drenched shower-door accident, but afterward, if memory serves, all parts are present and accounted for. At this point in one's reading in John Irving's novels one begins to wonder about all these wounds, rips, tears, broken bones, and vitiated organs. There arises the question, to adapt a phrase of

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Henry James's, of the disfigurement in the carpet.

It did not arise too urgently because John Irving's standing as a novelist was not itself an insistent question. His first three novels gave him the reputation of an interesting but minor writer. ("Garp," thinks the hero of Irving's next novel, "*hated* the reputation of 'small but serious.' ") Commercially, he appeared to be one of those novelists who would eventually have to be published by an outfit like the Fiction Collective. Then, in 1978, along came *The World According to Garp*, a success both critical and commercial. People not only bought this, Irving's fourth novel, they read it; they not only read it, they loved it. "Joyous and outrageous," wrote the critics, "full of vitality and grace," "rich and humorous," "brilliant," "overwhelming," "superb," "wonderful," "absolutely extraordinary."

EXTRAORDINARY *The World According to Garp* is. So loaded down with incident and invention is the novel that its plot beggars recapitulation. Briefly, it is an account of the life and times of a youngish novelist, T. S. Garp, the fatherless son of a well-born woman who, quite without consciously wishing it, becomes a feminist leader and heroine. Garp's wife is a university teacher, who teaches among other things a course in narrative technique, but it is Irving who attempts to show how much technique a narrative can have. His novel contains two separate short stories and the first chapter of another novel, *The World According to Bensenhaver*, which will make Garp himself a hugely bestselling novelist, even as, we now know, *The World According to Garp* made John Irving a bestselling novelist. Bears, wrestlers, Austria, by now old Irving standbys, put in their appearances. Instructions about writing and book reviewing are provided between bouts of sex (and sex, for Garp, "was always an act of terrific optimism"). Garp quotes Marcus Aurelius one moment, and the next—most unAurelianly—tups one of his childrens's babysitters. Mutilation fans will not be disappointed. One of the principal characters in the novel is a former tight-end for the Philadelphia Eagles who has had a sex-change operation. A group of militant feminists—the Ellen Jamesians—cut out their tongues. ("But Garp . . . felt the whole history of the world is self-mutilation.") There is a bit of couple-switching, also an assassination. The novel has an epilogue, in which two characters agree that "Garp was a man with remarkable energy."

The World According to Garp is not so much salted as drenched in sex and violence, but so is the world drenched in sex and violence, and so, too, in recent years have a large number of novels been drenched. The sex and violence in *Garp* do not, in any case, go very far toward explaining the novel's immense popularity, for these are to be had in ample supply elsewhere. In *The Water-Method Man* a passage runs: "You should always tell stories . . . in such a way that you make the audience feel good and wise, even a little ahead of you." This implies that a bestseller can be rigged, but here, too, there are reasons for doubting, for if it were so easily do-able it would be done more often. In the pages of *Garp*, Garp's editor feeds his authors' manuscripts to a cleaning woman at his publishing firm: "She did not like most things, but when she said she liked something, it meant to John Wolf [the editor] that nearly everybody else was at least sure to be able to read it." A valuable woman, clearly, every publishing house ought to have one, but I fear she exists only in John Irving's imagination.

No, when a book such as *The World According to Garp*, a book with serious literary pretensions, catches on so epidemically with the public, something else, something deeper than pat formulas for constructing bestsellers is involved. In the recent book *Bestsellers*,* which investigates the popular fiction of America and England during the 1970's, John Sutherland makes the point that vastly popular novels need to be considered from two points of view, the economic and the ideological. The economic has to do with the way a book is marketed. Of the ideological, Sutherland writes: "The bestseller expresses and feeds certain needs in the reading public. It consolidates prejudice, provides comfort, is therapy, offers vicarious reward or stimulus. In some socially controlled circumstances it may also indoctrinate or control a population's ideas on politically sensitive subjects. In other circumstances, especially where sexual mores are concerned, it may play a subversive social role."

"Ideological" has to be understood here in its loosest sense; certainly it does in considering the case of John Irving, for Irving is not, in any reasonable sense of the term, a radical or ideologue. On the contrary, in his novels he has demonstrated real disdain for people whose lives are controlled by their politics: the Ellen Jamesians in *Garp* and a group of Austrian radicals in his more recent novel, *The Hotel New Hampshire*, are equally detested by their author. The ideological freight carried by John Irving's recent novels is not, then, political in the strict sense, but is instead to be found in Irving's attitudes, point of view, what he himself calls his vision.

The young T.S. Garp, considering his own early writing, thinks: "What I need is *vision*, he knew. It will come, he repeated to himself. . . ." Has John Irving's vision come? His novels are an extraordinary jumble, of the sentimental and the violent, of the cute and the loathsome; reading them one sometimes feels one is reading a weird collaboration between J. D. Salinger and John Hawkes, a strained effort to be, simultaneously, adorable and gruesome. In *Bestsellers* John Sutherland says that bestselling fiction tends to divide ideologically between the emancipated (Erica Jong, for example) and the traditional (James Michener, for example). In a strange yet evidently commercially successful way, John Irving's latest novels tend to combine the emancipated and the traditional, the effect of which is to make his readers feel advanced in their views yet fundamentally sound in their emotions.

For instance while disdaining the

* Routledge & Kegan Paul, 268 pp., $18.95.

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wilder side of women's liberation in *Garp*, Irving views it very kindly. As a writer, T. S. Garp stays home, does the cooking and cleaning, and is generally, not at all to his displeasure, the model househusband. John Berry, the narrator in *The Hotel New Hampshire*, plays, quite comfortably, a roughly similar role in that novel. Yet the one character is an ardent wrestler, the other a serious weightlifter—traditionally masculine, one might even say *macho*, types. John Irving prides himself on his endless invention—"Garp," he writes, "was a natural story teller; he could make things up, one right after another. . . ."—but his real invention is in the creation of these heroes. They are extremely sensitive (Garp lies down next to his young son to smell the freshness of the boy's breath in his sleep), yet when it is required of them, brutally tough (John Berry, in *The Hotel New Hampshire*, kills a man with a bear-hug). These John Irving heroes, these sweet bruisers, are also permanently puerile, young men whose chief experience occurred in adolescence—it's downhill after your middle-teens, says a character in *The Hotel New Hampshire*—and who have been able to arrange things so that, whatever their chronological age, they never quite have to leave adolescence.

The Hotel New Hampshire has ridden high upon the bestseller lists for better than half a year now. The New York *Times*, in a capsule comment on the book in its bestseller list, describes it as "Life with an eccentric family." That description as aptly fits *The Brothers Karamazov*, so perhaps a better one might be, "Winning formula well in hand, John Irving strikes again." Although Lily Berry, the daughter of the family in this novel who is herself a bestselling novelist says, "My God, the next book has got to be bigger than the first," in fact *The Hotel New Hampshire* is not quite so vast in its canvas as *The World According to Garp*. It is about a family whose father harbors utopian illusions about running a hotel that will provide perfect hospitality, hospitality with slight psychological overtones. "People have to grow their own way," Father says. "We provide the space." Many of the same symbols and themes, incidents and concerns, appear here as in *Garp* and Irving's earlier novels: the Austrian interlude, the bears, the physical conditioning, the sidebar discussions of fiction ("Life is serious but art is fun"), the mutilations. The appeal, too, is similar. At the heart of this novel, as of *The World According to Garp*, is the allure of family.

As in *Garp*, so in *The Hotel New Hampshire*, family becomes a fortress of a kind into which one withdraws with one's children for protection against the cruelty of the world. Rape, in both novels, is a big item (". . . rape, Garp thought, made men feel guilt by association"). Rape is indeed at the very center of *The Hotel New Hampshire*; the rape and recovery from rape and revenge for rape of Franny Berry are the incidents that bind the novel together. At the novel's close, the narrator and his wife—formerly a lesbian so homely she preferred to go about in a bear costume (I'm not making this up; John Irving did)—move into a final hotel that they use as a rape crisis center.

The Hotel New Hampshire is pro-family and anti-rape. If these views do not simply take your breath away, let me go on to say that in all of John Irving's novels, discerning good from evil is never a problem; like every other moral question, it never really comes up. There are good folks and there are bastards in these novels, and one hardly needs a program to tell one from the other. Good folks can go under, but bastards get it in the neck—and in the nether regions. ("It was not one of Garp's better points: tolerance of the intolerant.") As the narrator of *The Hotel New Hampshire* puts it: "The way the world worked was *not* cause for some sort of blanket cynicism or sophomoric despair; according to my father and Iowa Bob, the way the world worked—which was badly—was just a strong incentive to live purposefully, and to be determined about living well." Now here is advice your local young law professor and a happy few million others can live with comfortably.

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Books in Review

From Rilke to Eichmann

HANNAH ARENDT: FOR LOVE OF THE WORLD. By ELISABETH YOUNG-BRUEHL. *Yale University Press. 563 pp. $25.00.*

Reviewed by WALTER LAQUEUR

This book is a labor of love. It is also an interesting and valuable study, essential to an understanding of a formidable and complex intellect. The author, a former doctoral student of the late Hannah Arendt, had access to her correspondence and also interviewed her surviving relatives and friends. The book contains much that is new and important—about Miss Arendt's childhood and adolescence, her two marriages, her friendship with Karl Jaspers, and her love affair with Martin Heidegger. It is not easy to reconstruct and to understand worlds which no longer exist and which one has not known—pre-World War I Koenigsberg, the universities of Weimar Germany, the Paris and New York of the European émigrés—but in this respect the book could hardly be bettered.

Hannah Arendt emerges from this biography an attractive figure. Even some of her personal lapses, some of the strangeness in her behavior, are now more readily intelligible. I for one had always been unable to understand her excessive admiration for Karl Jaspers—a substantial philosopher and psychiatrist, but hardly the greatest mind of his age, hardly the only "good German" or an obvious candidate for the Nobel peace prize, as Hannah Arendt believed. This biography clarifies the depth of her emotional attachment to the man who became her second father. (Paul Arendt was institutionalized when Hannah was a young child, and died a few years later.) In the circumstances, her cult of Jaspers was only natural; the tie was of the heart.

Indeed, what Jaspers was to Hannah Arendt, Miss Arendt seems to have been to Dr. Young-Bruehl. Perhaps the tie is not of the same intensity, but the inner kinship, the link which transcends intellect, is unmistakable all the same. The impression created is that Hannah Arendt, although mortal and therefore theoretically fallible, essentially could do no wrong, and those who criticize her are either vicious or envious, intellectual inferiors who simply cannot follow her daring mental exploits.

This quality of identification, which accounts for the empathy and the loving care of the book, also makes for lack of balance and objectivity. In the case of Hannah Arendt, such lack of objectivity reinforces one of the outstanding traits of *her* character and intellect. She was fiercely loyal to those whom she took to her heart, and by whom she was admired and loved in return. She had a genius for making friends, and she certainly made them in the right places. But there was another side to this: the tendency toward exaggeration spilled over into her judgment of people and of things and her diagnosis of political events and processes, especially her judgment first of the menace of totalitarianism and later of the extent to which totalitarianism had disappeared.

What underlay this tendency toward exaggeration? Was it the shock of Nazism, which would make it, to a certain extent, the problem not of an individual but of a whole generation? (Hannah Arendt was not the only German-Jewish immigrant who thought it likely that Senator Joseph McCarthy would become President of the United States in 1956.) It is a difficult question and there is no answer in this biography. Hannah Arendt was in some respects a woman of artistic sensibility, and exaggeration was the other side of this particular coin. Certainly this trait of hers made her more widely known; she was unpredictable and hence more interesting, she inspired passionate responses in others. Her intensely subjective approach was not a handicap in the occasional writing of poetry: there are some fine examples of her verse published for the first time in this book. But it was not, I believe, a good thing in her chosen field, which was politics in the widest sense.

According to the publisher's blurb, Miss Arendt was one of the foremost political philosophers of our era. Such intellectual sales talk is perhaps not meant to be taken too seriously, but it is indeed difficult to think of many others whose work continues to attract so much interest. She has been the subject of articles, books, radio programs, conferences, and now a biography. There has been no similar interest in recent years in Herbert Marcuse, the members of the Frankfurt School, George Lichtheim, or others who were her intellectual equals. Of her contemporaries, two can be said to have established schools—Raymond Aron and Leo Strauss. These were more committed thinkers, and incidentally cordially disliked by Hannah Arendt. As a political philosopher and commentator, Miss Arendt was most impressive in her *obiter dicta* on a great number of subjects. There is thus no Arendtian school.

This is not to disparage her work, for some of her books are undoubtedly of more enduring value than whole libraries of behaviorist writings. Nor is it to say that a political thinker must necessarily be a builder of systems. But a minimum of consistency is required, and this is often absent in Hannah Arendt. She admired Rosa Luxemburg—even though she knew full well the consequences of revolutions such as Rosa Luxemburg dreamed of. She was enormously excited when in

WALTER LAQUEUR, *author of* Weimar: A Cultural History *and* The Terrible Secret, *among other works, is chairman of the Research Council of Georgetown University and a contributing editor of* COMMENTARY.

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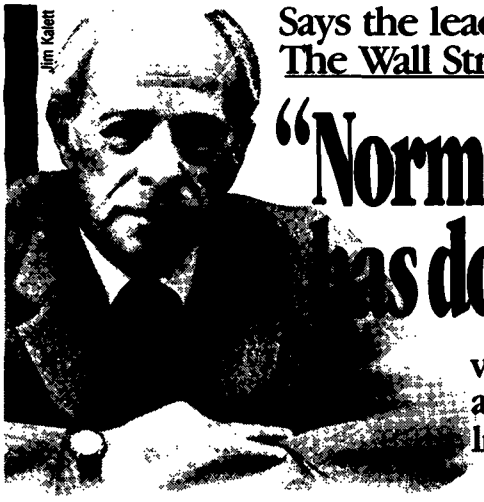
1968 students at Columbia and Chicago seized some university buildings, and she went to visit them—but she disapproved of most of their aims and maintained that the universities must "remain outside the power struggle."

MONTAIGNE once noted that the virtue needed for the affairs of the world is a virtue with many bends and angles so as to adapt to human weakness, and that he who walks in the crowd must step aside, keep his elbows in, even leave the straight way. Hannah Arendt loved mankind but had an almost pathological aversion to crowds and mass meetings. When Hans Morgenthau asked her whether she was a conservative or a liberal she replied that she really did not know "and I suppose I never had any such position. You know the Left thinks I am conservative, and the conservatives think I am Left or a maverick or God knows what. And I must say I couldn't care less."

A disarming answer, and no doubt partly a correct one, for the labels frequently did not fit her, as they no longer fit many others. But the answer is not quite satisfactory. Hannah Arendt believed that in politics one can pick and choose the issues on which to take a stand, leaving the rest to other people or perhaps to posterity. Such a division of labor may have much to commend it in other fields of human endeavor, but in politics it is not acceptable.

She possessed to a rare degree some of the qualities necessary for writing about politics and history —erudition, imagination, passion, intellectual curiosity, an original frame of mind. She very much lacked others—common sense, practical wisdom, balanced judgment, respect for facts. Her temper was not that of a historian or a student of politics. In commenting on politics she was as capable of insight as of irrelevancy and when challenged she would defend either with equal fervor.

This biography shows that Hannah Arendt's real interest (and indeed her real strength) lay in the realm of abstraction on the one hand, and in poetry on the other. She seems to have felt less comfort-



Says the lead editorial in The Wall Street Journal—

"Norman Podhoretz has done it again,

visiting an epidemic of apoplexy upon Manhattan's literary salons."

"Norman Podhoretz Breaks a Leg," reads the *Village Voice* headline. "Our West Side mini-Spengler," sneers Arthur Schlesinger Jr. in *Harper's*. "A potted historian," fumes Theodore Draper in *The New Republic*.

From *The New York Times* right across the nation Podhoretz's *Why We Were in Vietnam* has hit a nerve. Why the frenzied rebuttals? Robert W. Kagan's review in the same issue of *The Wall Street Journal* says it best:

"Mr. Podhoretz has performed a valuable service by clearing away much of the deceptive rhetoric of the Vietnam period. **No doubt he will arouse the ire of those he has embarrassed in the process.** But his book is important, for it disposes of myths and falsehoods that have to be set aside if we are to understand the real errors of Vietnam."

As *The Philadelphia Inquirer* rightly predicts:

"It should generate heavy debate, considering the crises brewing in Central America." —*John Grant*

"An important and timely book.

Podhoretz's argument that our attempt to save Vietnam from Communism was an act of idealism, albeit imprudent, should help restore our sense of national purpose and enable us to act once again as a world power committed to the defense of freedom."

—*Guenter Lewy, author of America in Vietnam*

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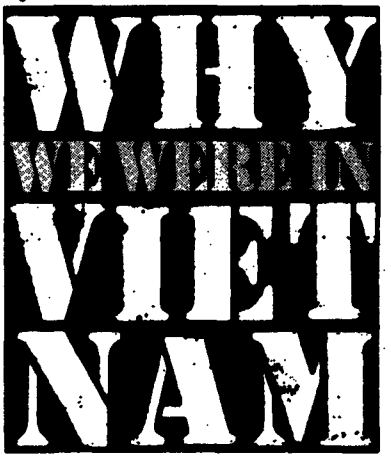

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able among scholars than among writers and literary critics; these saw in her a kindred spirit, and it was they who welcomed *The Origins of Totalitarianism* and her subsequent books with enthusiasm. Students of history and politics were on the whole less enraptured. It is even possible that in a quieter time she would have shown no more interest in politics than have other philosophers or poets. But then she belonged to a generation which had been politicized by *force majeure*. Hence the inevitable progress from Rilke to such essays as "Lying in Politics" and "Reflections on Little Rock."

THE controversy over Hannah Arendt's 1963 book, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, made her known to a much wider circle than all her other books taken together. Dr. Young-Bruehl believes that by and large Hannah Arendt was right and her critics wrong: there *was* something akin to a conspiracy of silence concerning the role of Jewish officialdom in Nazi-occupied Europe, and Miss Arendt, who courageously spoke the truth, was ostracized for breaking the taboo. Dr. Young-Bruehl also complains about the low intellectual level of the controversy which, she thinks, was "largely determined by the editorial policies of the major magazines and journals."

It is true that not all the attacks on Miss Arendt's book took place on a high level of knowledge and sophistication—many of them, however, did. In any event, the notion that Gershom Scholem or her old friends from Berlin like Robert Weltsch were influenced by the editorial policies of the major New York magazines is, to put it mildly, far-fetched. Those who replied to Miss Arendt felt very strongly about the subject. Some may have lacked detachment, and some may even have been wrong. But the suggestion that they followed a party line makes one doubt Dr. Young-Bruehl's competence in dealing with this issue.

Nor is this the only occasion when the biographer's understandable desire to refight the old battles on Miss Arendt's side leads her seriously astray. In November 1953 Hannah Arendt wrote to William Zuckerman: "I decided that I do not want to have anything to do with Jewish politics any longer." Her biographer undertakes to provide the historical background of this pronouncement.

> In February 1953, an explosion had injured three people in the courtyard of the Soviet legation in Tel Aviv, the culmination of the ferocious anti-Soviet sentiment, often couched in religious terms, that had grown by leaps and bounds in Israel after the late 1952 anti-Zionist trials in Prague. The Israeli government vociferously denied responsibility for the incident. The Soviets withdrew their legation and severed diplomatic relations. This was one front of tension, another was more dangerous. Throughout 1952 and 1953, hundreds of so-called Arab infiltrees, displaced people trying to return to their homeland, had been either killed or captured by the Israelis. Arab resentment of the Jewish government had escalated with the passing of the nationality law in March 1952 which was only too similar in its principles to the American McCarran Act. . . .

What is one to make of this? In these six sentences almost everything is wrong but the fact that a bomb did indeed explode in Tel Aviv. There were no "anti-Zionist trials" in Prague—unless Dr. Young-Bruehl happens to believe that Slansky and his comrades were Zionists, which even Stalinists nowadays do not maintain. The bomb in Tel Aviv was thrown by an unhinged person; it was no more a "culmination" of "ferocious anti-Soviet sentiment" than John Hinckley's shots can be regarded as the culmination of anti-Reagan feeling on the American Left. There was fear in Israel that an anti-Semitic campaign was about to engulf the Soviet bloc, and we know that this was justified; if Stalin had not died many more would have perished. But there was nothing "religious" about these fears; the religious groups in Israel were very moderate at the time, and always counseled refraining from any action which might provoke the Russians. As for the "vociferous denials" of the Israeli government, what else should it have done? The bombing was a calamity; if the government had not denied involvement, would Dr. Young-Bruehl have argued that it was tacitly accepting responsibility? Hundreds of refugees did indeed cross the borders, but they did so not with ploughshares but with explosives. In the period which Dr. Young-Bruehl is describing, prior to the Sinai campaign, some 3,000 such attacks took place in which 400 Israelis were killed and 900 injured. Israel was unprepared for this kind of warfare; there was panic, there was the beginning of a mass flight from the border settlements. What should the Israelis have done in defense of their lives?

One may argue that the fact that an Arab refugee problem came into being was a disaster, that relations between Israel and the Arabs were further poisoned by the spiral of raids and counterraids. One may even argue that the Jews should not have come to Palestine in the first place. But to deny the fact that Israeli settlements were subject to widespread attack in 1953 is to invite ridicule.

THUS, however regrettably, one is back in the old controversies. There is reason to doubt whether Hannah Arendt herself would have written about the Prague trials and their impact as her biographer does. In this case one sees how filial piety, a sentiment that does credit to the biographer's heart, may actually render a certain disservice to the woman she wants to protect. Hannah Arendt was not a saint, and such crossings of the line between biography and hagiography make a fine book less credible.

The story of Miss Arendt's tortured relation to Israel and the Jewish people does not end here. During the Six-Day war of 1967 (her biographer relates) Miss Arendt was intensely proud of Israeli victories, behaving, as one of her friends remarked, "like a war bride." In the Yom Kippur war of 1973, she feared that Israel might be destroyed, and wrote to Mary McCarthy that a real catastrophe in Israel would affect her more deeply than almost anything else. How is

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one to explain these profound emotions concerning the fate of a state which, she had argued in 1947 and subsequently, should not have come into being in the first place? Was it just worry about the welfare of some friends and relatives, or a throwback to some atavistic tribal feeling? Inconsistencies like these make it difficult even now to do justice to Hannah Arendt, the political commentator. Like the period about which she wrote so eloquently, she remains part of the *unbewaeltigte Vergangenheit*, the past that remains to be mastered.

Engineers & Society

BLAMING TECHNOLOGY. By SAMUEL C. FLORMAN. *St. Martin's Press. 207 pp. $12.95.*

THE SOUL OF A NEW MACHINE. By TRACY KIDDER. *Little, Brown. 293 pp. $13.95.*

Reviewed by JEFFREY MARSH

EVER since the industrial revolution, the role of technology in reshaping our physical and social environment has been inescapable. Vehicles are able to transport men at unprecedented speed over and beneath the surface of the earth, on or below the ocean waves, through the air, and even to the moon and planets. Oil refineries and large chemical plants transform a variety of unprepossessing raw materials into fuels and fertilizer, fabrics, foodstuffs, and pharmaceuticals. The functioning of modern societies depends on electric light and power, and a common global culture is transmitted at the speed of light via radio and television. Successive waves of technological innovation have made life longer and healthier, working hours shorter and easier, and food cheaper and more abundant.

The transformations wrought by new technology have not all been welcome, however. It is not difficult to see why those threatened by its immediate impact, from the Luddites of the 19th century to today's assembly-line workers fearful of

JEFFREY MARSH *has written on science for* COMMENTARY *and other periodicals.*

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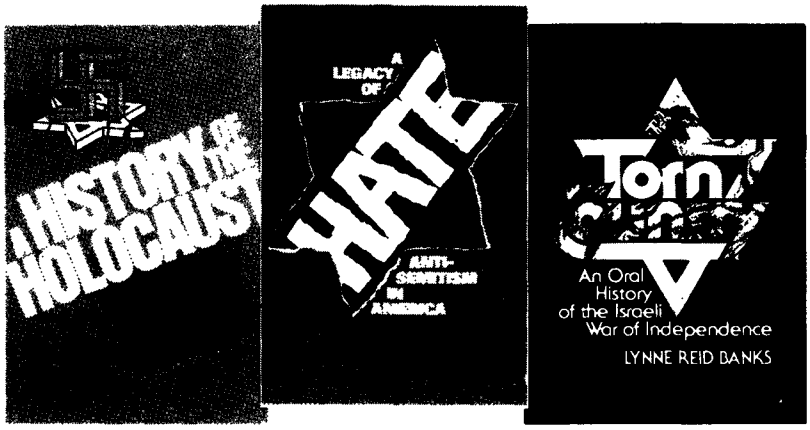

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displacement by industrial robots, have looked on technological progress with a jaundiced eye. Also easy to understand are the widespread fears of technology applied to directly threatening ends, such as increasingly more destructive weapons, or of the environmental ravages which may be caused by insensitive practice, from the uncontrolled mining of coal to ill-placed dams. But there is a deeper level of disquiet about technology which is readily discernible in the widespread nostalgia for a lost world of greater simplicity that characterizes even many who unquestioningly accept technology's benefits. Even more marked is the strain of active hostility demonstrated by some literary and humanist intellectuals, from Romantic poets to today's anti-nuclear activists.

In *Blaming Technology*, Samuel Florman discusses the current manifestations of this anti-technological animus. Florman is a practicing civil engineer who has written extensively on the relationships among technology, culture, and society. His book, a collection of essays, covers a wide span of topics, but the underlying theme is that technology, rather than being the inhuman historical juggernaut its foes depict, is simply the response of engineers to the expressed needs of society.

In several succeeding essays, Florman demonstrates in elegant fashion that technology is a servant of man rather than his master. First, he reminds us of a series of highly touted technological advances that foundered in the marketplace, either because of unforeseen changes in economic conditions or because of unpredictable human preference. These include, in the recent past, the Wankel rotary engine, Corfam synthetic leather, and the supersonic transport. Having thus disposed of the notion of technological autonomy, Florman then explodes the myth of technocracy. By a simple survey of engineers in the higher grades of the federal civil service, in appointed and elected political office, and in the upper reaches of private industry, he shows that technically trained professionals are, if anything, underrepresented among those who run modern American society.

Florman offers a number of examples to illustrate his theme that technology follows, rather than leads, society. A particularly interesting essay traces the history of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, an organization much maligned for its supposed devotion to raiding the government treasury in pursuit of its never sated desire to build bigger and better boondoggles in the form of unnecessary dams and waterways. He suggests that the structure of the Corps (32,000 civil servants supervised by 300 army officers rotated through three-year tours of duty), and its total dependence for financing on annual congressional appropriations, means that the Corps is actually one of the most politically responsive institutions in the country. This is reflected in the circumstance that since 1972, when it was given (against its will) responsibility for the environmental protection of all the nation's wetlands, it has become an environmental watchdog second to none.

In a chapter on nuclear power, Florman reminds us of the unassailable arguments for the superiority of nuclear power on the grounds of economics, cleanliness, and safety, and points out that radioactive-waste disposal is an unsettled issue not for technical reasons but because of a political failure of will linked to intuitive irrational fears. The tension between rationality and intuition is explored further in an essay on the small-is-beautiful movement, whose patron saint is the late E. F. Schumacher and whose most indefatigable proponent is Amory Lovins. Florman shows that a single standard of small-and-good versus big-and-bad, however appealing to Americans, is hopelessly simpleminded, and that the complexity of modern society is in fact an index of its ability to protect man from the vicissitudes of

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nature. The expansion of personal horizons made available by large cosmopolitan cities, in particular, has enriched modern society both materially and spiritually.

Florman cites numerous historical examples to show that technological advance has always been associated with danger, such as the increased outbreaks of fire when frame houses replaced log cabins, or the frequent explosions in early steam engines. He points out that such problems were subsequently overcome without the abandonment of the technology that "created" them. This is the general pattern of progress, in which the engineer plays a necessary, sometimes heroic, but frequently misunderstood or maligned role.

If Florman leaves us with the impression that the engineer's lot is an unhappy one, a rather different perspective is given by Tracy Kidder in *The Soul of a New Machine.* Kidder provides a closeup look at the frontier of the newest industrial technology; in his book, broader social issues recede to the periphery as he concentrates on the motivations of a mostly young team of computer engineers working frantically to meet a self-appointed deadline. Kidder is a writer without technical background, and his novelistic treatment is sufficiently compelling to have propelled his book onto the bestseller list and for it to have received the 1982 American Book Award for nonfiction. To read it is to understand that engineers still lie within the mainstream of the American consciousness.

Kidder's hero, Tom West, is a maverick who is now a middle manager at Delta General Corporation; before becoming a computer engineer, he had dropped out of Amherst College to be a folk singer in Cambridge coffeehouses and later wandered the world building and installing superaccurate clocks for the Smithsonian Institution. The company he works for is itself a maverick in the booming minicomputer industry. Founded in 1968 by three engineers who had left Digital Equipment Corporation, the industry leader, under mysterious circumstances, Data

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General through its technical competence and aggressive approach to marketing managed within ten years to become one of the 500 largest industrial corporations in the nation, while still retaining a somewhat raffish image.

In the late 1970's, Digital Equipment developed a new computer, VAX, the first machine in a new class known as 32-bit superminicomputers. West decided he would produce a supermini to outperform VAX, and conducted a clandestine industrial espionage operation to examine VAX's internal workings. Unfortunately, higher management at Data General was reluctant to fund the new project. West then offered to construct a 32-bit machine that would be fully compatible with Data General's existing line of Eclipse computers. This proved a powerful marketing argument, since customers who already owned Eclipses could trade up to the newer and more powerful machine without having to discard or rewrite their extensive libraries of programs. When he proposed to produce such a machine in less than a year, setting an exceedingly ambitious goal, he was given permission to proceed.

WEST set about building a team, which eventually included about thirty people. He particularly sought young computer engineers fresh out of graduate school who showed promise (in the form of good grades) and who freely expressed ambition. The incentive he offered was not money but the psychic gratification of hard work on the creative frontiers of computer design. Even the more senior members of West's team were still in their twenties or early thirties. Veterans and newcomers alike had cut their teeth on things mechanical and electronic; their specific interest in computers had developed in college, and for the younger ones even earlier, and many were obsessed with the machines.

The team was divided into two groups. One group worked on circuitry, the other on the coding which instructed the machine internally. Tension was palpable as they began their task. Thousands of chips had to be programmed and assembled. The design and assembly of the machine had to be followed by thorough debugging, to insure not only that all the complex parts worked separately as they were intended to do, but also that their multiple interactions produced the correct results in the operating computer. Two prototypes constructed for thorough testing were surrounded by elaborate computerized diagnostic equipment that could take electronic "snapshots," one every 220 billionths of a second, of the internal structure of the working machine. A simulator—a program which could be run on an existing computer and mimic the way the new machine could be expected to behave—was written as a vital aid to the painstaking analysis needed every time an error showed up in one of the massive battery of tests applied to the new system. As the project advanced, work proceeded around the clock, with two formal shifts and much overlap as individual engineers put in massive amounts of overtime, at no extra pay, to meet the deadline and satisfy their own personal drive for perfection.

West was on top of all this activity, not only monitoring the progress of each part of the overall task, but also keeping track of the myriad other requirements which had to be met if the final product was to be a useful and salable commodity rather than a virtuoso technical curiosity. Communicating via the group leaders, he kept himself remote from the junior engineers and acted as the lightning rod for their hostility. West's Machiavellian managerial techniques kept his engineers hard at work and pushing forward at a level beyond what they themselves believed possible. Meanwhile, he had to make sure that adequate support was forthcoming from higher management. The engineers constantly felt shortchanged in their spartan surroundings and with the kind of equipment pro-

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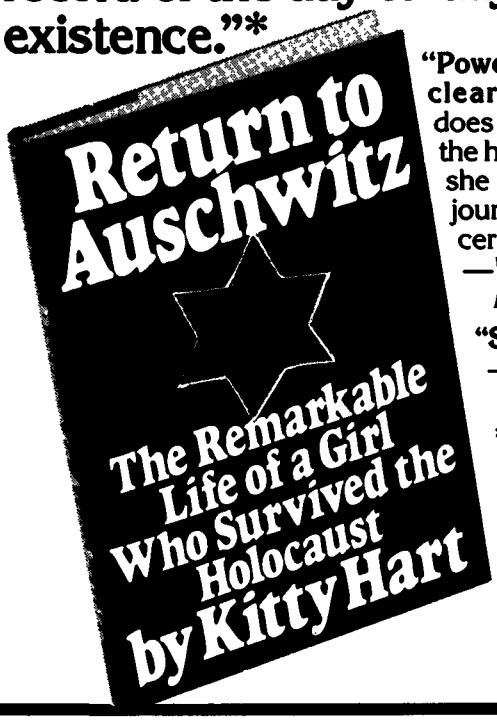

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—*Washington Post Book World*

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vided by Data General's notoriously tight-fisted management.

The original schedule had slipped six months by the time the new computer was in full operating condition, and another six months went by before the machine, now named the Eclipse MV 8000, could be formally introduced to the market in the spring of 1980. The added delay gave time to write additional software for the new machine and to eliminate more bugs. The Eclipse MV 8000 rapidly took a significant market share and helped bolster Data General's earnings performance, which had begun to falter as the company found it difficult to continue its early pace of growth. The team split up; West himself moved to a new position with Data General, while other leading members left the company.

KIDDER's rendition of this technological epic makes fascinating reading, and it is not surprising that the book has become a bestseller. (It has even inspired a parody in the pages of *Datamation*, the leading trade journal of the computer industry.) His protagonists, working in the newest and most glamorous branch of engineering, spend little time mulling over the concerns delineated by Florman. Kidder's story resembles nothing so much as one of those familiar movie epics, like *The Guns of Navarone* or *The Dirty Dozen*, where a select band of specialists accomplishes some impossible mission, each member having volunteered to face incredible odds for no discernible motive other than male pride. It is no wonder that West's secretary, a lady of great resourcefulness though apparently one with an unraised consciousness, remarked that engineering is a man's world.

Kidder's engineers, like Florman's, are bound by the constraints of their profession. Florman cites a definition of engineering as doing for $1 what any fool can do for $2; this is paraphrased on a sign on Tom West's wall as "Not Every Job Worth Doing Is Worth Doing Well." Both groups are conscious of the way in which society and their employers shortchange their efforts, both materially and in terms of recognition (although Kid-

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der briefly mentions a recent escalation in salaries as a response to the shortage of computer engineers). The difference is that where Florman's engineers are tragic heroes, Kidder's engineers are bold enough to be heroic, but too young to be tragic.

In the Gulag

KOLYMA TALES. By VARLAM SHALAMOV. Translated by JOHN GLAD. *Norton. 222 pp. $4.95 (paper).*
GRAPHITE. By VARLAM SHALAMOV. Translated by JOHN GLAD. *Norton. 287 pp. $14.95.*

Reviewed by MAURICE FRIEDBERG

TO ALL appearances, the man who died last January in the obscurity of a Moscow old-age home was a minor Russian poet. At seventy-five, Varlam Shalamov had four modest volumes of verse to his credit, some essays, and, as is common in the USSR among impecunious literati trying to make ends meet, a few translations from an incongruous assortment of languages, including Kazakh, Chuvash, Bulgarian, and Yiddish. (An ethnic Russian, he probably had put them together with the help of interlinear renditions, a normal Soviet practice.) A brief article in the Soviet *Literary Encyclopedia* printed in 1975 notes also that Varlam Shalamov had begun to publish over four decades earlier and casually mentions that he had been wrongly arrested in 1937, and released in due time (whenever that was) for lack of evidence.

The casual aside is important, for it alone hints at what is nowhere stated openly in the meager literature dealing with Shalamov's work that has appeared over the years in the USSR. The truth is that Shalamov's original and translated verse is incidental, as are his other writings brought out by Soviet publishers. His fame rests, instead, on scores of short stories about Soviet prisons and labor camps where he was an inmate, with some interruptions, for an incredibly long period stretching from the late 1920's to the mid-1950's.

A full list of his alleged crimes may not matter now, since these were, in any case, subsequently found to lack substance. One "criminal" transgression, however, is both real and grotesque enough to warrant mention for the sake of the historical record. In 1943, while war against Nazi Germany was at its height, Shalamov was sentenced to an additional ten years of confinement for asserting that Ivan Bunin, the Nobel Prize-winning Russian author then living in France, was a classic of Russian literature. Now that Bunin is dead, such claims are routinely asserted in the Soviet Union—while much of Shalamov's own work is still deemed subversive. Unacceptable to official publishers, it has been relegated to *samizdat*.

Varlam Shalamov's stories of Kolyma, a region in northeastern Siberia where, in Robert Conquest's estimate, over the years between two and three million people died in Soviet camps, had been known in dissident circles in the USSR for some time before finally reaching the West. Several of his tales came out in German fifteen years ago, and shortly thereafter a French edition appeared, a translation of the German text, with the author's name misspelled. Incredibly, it is misspelled again (as Shalamav) on the jacket of the second of the two volumes recently brought out in this country; the first, one is happy to report, is already available in paperback. Both contain a representative selection of Shalamov's prose. John Glad's English rendition reads well, no mean feat considering the idiosyncratic Russian spoken by the author's cast of prisoners and jailers.

INEVITABLY, writing of this kind elicits questions of an extra-literary nature. One of these, understandably, has to do with the authentic-

MAURICE FRIEDBERG, *professor of Russian literature at the University of Illinois, is the author of, among other books,* A Decade of Euphoria: Western Literature in Post-Stalin Russia.

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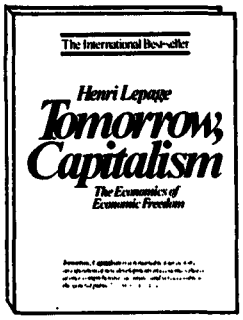

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ity of Shalamov's portrayal of the Soviet universe of prisons and camps. On that score, there should be no doubts. Shalamov's reliability as an eyewitness is attested by no less an authority than Alexander Solzhenitsyn, who in *The Gulag Archipelago* (a book on which he had invited Shalamov to collaborate) actually defers to Shalamov as a chronicler of the Soviet penal inferno. Writing in his own now classic study of the subject, Solzhenitsyn states:

> Shalamov's camp experience was more bitter and longer than mine, and I acknowledge with esteem that it fell to him rather than to me to plumb those depths of beastliness and despair to which the whole camp way of life was dragging us all down.

There are scattered references to Dostoevsky in Shalamov's stories. These are meant to draw the reader's attention to the drastic changes for the worse that have taken place in Siberia's prisons in the century that ensued since Dostoevsky's eyewitness account of them, one of the first ever by a major writer. (Dostoevsky's account actually evoked some grumbling from the imperial Russian censorship for suggesting that criminals were being coddled in Siberia. By contrast, before Stalin's death, officially inspired Soviet writing, on the rare occasions when it referred to the subject at all, emphasized the supposed humaneness in the treatment of prisoners. Nikolai Pogodin's play, *The Aristocrats,* which is set in the Gulag, is a *comedy*. The Soviet *Theatrical Encyclopedia* describes it as dealing with "the subject of labor that transforms human beings and enriches them spiritually.")

It is not Dostoevsky, however, but Chekhov who comes to the mind of the reader of Shalamov. His best stories reflect the master's literary attributes of restraint, understatement, description without explanation, and scrupulous avoidance of preachiness. These combine to convey a sense of the matter-of-factness of horror—which is something quite different from the "banality of evil," an unfortunate and misleading phrase invoked by the late Hannah Arendt to explain the moral meaning of participation in the Nazi program of genocide. Thus, we read in one tale: "The orderly was happy that the man died in the morning, and not in the evening, since the orderly got the dead man's ration for the day. Everyone realized this." A similar effect is produced in another story:

> In the package was an official document with a request to show convict Frisorger (crime, sentence) his daughter's declaration. A copy of the declaration was enclosed. In it she wrote briefly and simply that she was convinced her father was an enemy of the people and that she renounced him and requested that her relationship to him be regarded as nonexistent.

Hunger, disease, heavy labor, sub-Arctic cold, intimidation, and terror practiced not merely by the camp guards but also by their unwitting allies, the common criminals, ultimately reduce camp inmates to a level that is even lower than constant pain. That state is one of permanent lethargy, physical and mental alike:

> We understood that death was no worse than life, and we feared neither. We were overwhelmed by indifference. We knew that it was in our power to end this life the very next day and now and again we made that decision, but each time life's trivia would interfere with our plans. Today, they would promise an extra kilo of bread as a reward for good work, and it would be simply foolish to commit suicide on such a day. The following time the orderly of the next barracks would promise a smoke to pay back an old debt. . . . We were disciplined and obedient to our superiors. We understood that truth and falsehood were sisters and that there were thousands of truths in the world. We considered our-

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selves virtual saints, since we had redeemed all our sins by our years in the camp.

A numbness of sorts pervades the tales as a whole, as if the accumulation of horrors could not be related or understood except under very heavy sedation. In Andrei Sinyavsky's apt characterization of Varlam Shalamov: "He writes as if he were dead."

Many of Shalamov's readers will, no doubt, attempt to draw comparisons between the hell of the Gulag and that of the Holocaust. Understandable though the impulse may be, it is, when all is said and done, pointless. One detail, however, must not be allowed to escape attention. In contrast to West Germany after Hitler, no open trials of those responsible for the nightmare of the Gulag have ever been held in the USSR, and not all of the camps have disappeared in the wake of Stalin's death, thirty years ago.

A Life in Politics

THE IMPERIAL ROCKEFELLER: A BIOGRAPHY OF NELSON A. ROCKEFELLER. By JOSEPH E. PERSICO. *Simon & Schuster. 314 pp. $16.50.*

Reviewed by BRYAN LOPS

WHILE immense family wealth may be an increasingly rare phenomenon in American society, it is still deeply intriguing to study and observe—especially when it is combined with great political ambition. So argues Joseph Persico in *The Imperial Rockefeller*. Persico, who served as chief speechwriter to Nelson Rockefeller from 1966 to 1977, attempts to back up this contention by presenting the first "inside" biography of the late four-term Governor of New York, Vice President to Gerald Ford, three-time aspirant for the Republican presidential nomination, and most celebrated grandchild of John D. Rockefeller, the richest man on earth at the beginning of the century.

BRYAN LOPS *is a Developmental Fellow in the Department of Politics and Institute of French Studies at New York University.*

What Persico actually produces is less a coherent biography than a roughly chronological string of episodes in Rockefeller's life and career. These are punctuated by excursions into such matters as his relationships with his brothers, children, and staff; the lushness of his Pocantico Hills estate and other residences; his lifelong passion for art, especially of the abstract variety; and his affliction with dyslexia, which kept him from ever becoming anything more than a mediocre orator and which also more or less turned the written word into an enemy for him to overcome.

Unfortunately, because the text of *The Imperial Rockefeller* is relatively short and the number of chapters is relatively high, the overall effect of this biography is one of choppiness. The book, nevertheless, will probably come to be regarded as a useful storehouse of information about one of the key actors in American politics from the late 1950's to the mid-1970's, a man Persico characterizes as "a paradigm of the unreflective activist, a man for whom unfilled hours had an almost terrifying quality and to whom movement equaled forward motion."

One of the most valuable services Persico renders is to make it clear that Rockefeller had already compiled a solid if not spectacular record of public service long before New York's voters first sent him to the statehouse. After spending the decade following his graduation from Dartmouth involved in the family enterprises, Rockefeller first descended on Washington in 1940 as the State Department's Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs, a position offered to him by his fellow Hudson River patrician, Franklin D. Roosevelt. Roosevelt was impressed both by Rockefeller's Republican establishment credentials and his argument—developed during the course of two journeys to Latin America on family business—

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that the fall of Western Europe had left the Western hemisphere especially vulnerable to Axis propaganda and penetration, and hence necessitated a vigorous U.S. effort to shore up the countries of Latin America.

After acquitting himself in this task with an exuberance that won him celebrity status and a place on the front cover of *Life*, Rockefeller in 1944 was named Assistant Secretary of State for Latin America. But in less than a year he found himself dismissed by President Harry Truman—who was acting, Persico says, "under pressure from the liberal foreign-policy community."

Rockefeller bided his time by launching his own multimillion-dollar philanthropic and commercial venture for stimulating Latin American economic development. He also served as chairman of a presidential panel advising Truman on the implementation of the Point Four Program. In 1952, with his party swept back into power, Rockefeller eagerly set out to make the most of the available opportunities, serving within a span of three years on a presidential commission on government reorganization, as the first Under Secretary of the newly established Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, and as a White House Special Assistant for Foreign Affairs.

It was in the last of these posts that Rockefeller experienced the most frustrating moments of his early exposure to the Washington power game, for he had managed to incur the dislike of both Secretary of State John Foster Dulles—who reacted negatively toward anyone he perceived as a threat to his monopolization of foreign policy—and Treasury Secretary George Humphrey, whose devotion to the old-time Republican economic religion made him instinctively suspicious of "big spenders." The White House episode permanently soured Rockefeller on appointive office, and convinced him that in order to accomplish anything substantial in public affairs one needed an elective power base. Thus, after resigning in December 1955 and returning once again to the family enterprises, he began charting the course which he hoped would make him, in the words of a Latin American phrase he was fond of, *un auténtico representante del pueblo*—"an authentic representative of the people."

The Imperial Rockefeller usefully reminds us that the East Coast internationalism Rockefeller personified—and which had triumphed over the Midwestern isolationist currents in the Republican party—was above all anti-totalitarian, and as such vigorously anti-Communist. Those who remember Rockefeller as the *de facto* head of the Republican party's liberal wing may be surprised by Persico's rather sarcastic description of his former employer as a "constant cold warrior" afflicted with a "reflexive anti-Communism."

Rockefeller's concern about Communist expansionism and subversion was even strong enough to produce some mild collaboration with his old political rival, Richard Nixon, a man toward whom his personal feelings remained ambivalent up to the very end. In 1969 Rockefeller spent several months on a presidential mission to Latin America which Nixon, anxious to neutralize Communist overtures to the region, had asked him to undertake just three days after the inauguration. The next year, during the domestic outcry that followed Nixon's ordering of the incursion into Cambodia, Rockefeller made a surprising display of his essentially hawkish views on the war in Indochina. Rejecting a key adviser's suggestion to maintain a discreet silence, Rockefeller instead not only became the only state governor to express support for the Cambodia operation; according to Persico he also spent half an hour on the telephone commiserating with the President over the public furor. He later told his associates: "You can say what you want about Dick Nixon. But the man sure is a patriot."

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Foreign policy also figures prominently in Persico's account of the former governor's personal relationships. This is because one of the two or three non-family members to whom Rockefeller was closest—in a relationship which, Persico agrees, approximated that between an older and younger brother—was his protégé Henry Kissinger, whom he had originally recruited as a consultant during his brief tenure in the Eisenhower White House.

Given Rockefeller's habit of cavalierly using and discarding both experts and their advice—a trait amply documented in *The Imperial Rockefeller*—one cannot help but wonder what kept this scion bred on grandfather John's capitalist ingenuity and this German-Jewish refugee bred on the theories of Hans Morgenthau so close for so many years. Persico argues that it was their shared vision of American power and toughness—as well as Rockefeller's conviction that in helping this young and ambitious Harvard professor he was providing the same kind of opportunities America had offered John D. two generations before. "Each man," in short, as Persico writes, "was an affirmation to the other of the country's infinite promise."

Persico also points out that one reason it was Nixon instead of Rockefeller who wound up as Kissinger's boss in the White House had to do with the nature of Rockefeller's transition from his first to his second marriages. It is a profound commentary on the way American attitudes toward politicians and matrimony have changed in recent years that when Rockefeller, already actively in the running for the 1964 Republican presidential nomination, having eighteen months earlier separated from Mary Todhunter Clark, announced in May 1963 that he had married Margaretta "Happy" Murphy, a divorcee with four young children, pandemonium broke loose in both the Rockefeller campaign and family. Former Senator Prescott Bush of Connecticut, up until that time an ally, branded Rockefeller a destroyer of the American family, and Rockefeller's standing in the Gallup Poll almost immediately plummeted 13 points. Only one of Nelson's four brothers was even willing to attend the marriage ceremony. The "morality issue" (*circa* 1964) dogged Rockefeller throughout the rest of the campaign.

Like the other members of his family, Rockefeller possessed an aristocratic reserve that was repelled by excessive familiarity. Once he became immersed in a crowd, his inexhaustible supply of adrenalin was able to produce the glad-handing bonhomie for which he was famous, but Persico reports that he often rolled his eyes and moaned, "God, do I really have to do this?" before taking the plunge. In general, despite his habit of nonchalantly making large financial gifts to associates whose help he appreciated, Rockefeller tended to be wary of outsiders.

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ALL of this is interesting and enlightening. Nevertheless, for two reasons the serious student of politics is likely in the end to find *The Imperial Rockefeller* a disappointing book. The first reason concerns Persico's decision to place overriding emphasis on Rockefeller's personal and family wealth. Admittedly, in a biography of Nelson Rockefeller one expects to find references to his magnificent residences, his sumptuous art collection, and the lavish scale on which he undertook almost any enterprise. But Persico simply overdoes it.

The second and more serious defect of *The Imperial Rockefeller* is Persico's failure to place his subject's life and career in historical and political perspective. The section of the book which examines the legacy of Rockefeller's years in the statehouse is brief and largely anecdotal, while the short assessment of Rockefeller's life at the end of the book focuses on the ultimately unanswerable question of whether or not Rockefeller's accomplishments were commensurate with his advantages.

What Persico totally fails to grasp is that besides being a para-

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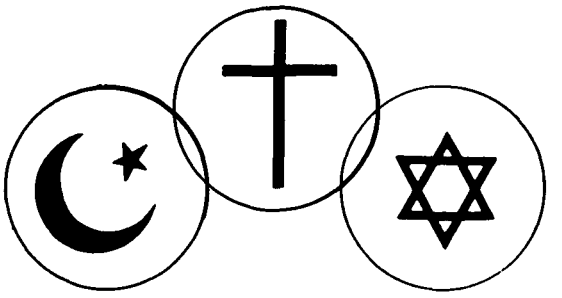
digm of the unreflective activist, Nelson Rockefeller was the prototype of a liberal reformer who stood four-square against the destructive trends which began to engulf American liberalism in the mid-1960's.

Certainly no one can question Rockefeller's credentials as a liberal reformer. During his fifteen years as governor of New York, Rockefeller pioneered the most comprehensive antidiscrimination laws in the country and supported regular increases in the minimum wage and workmen's compensation. He established a Department of Environmental Conservation, helped build more than 50 new state parks, and sponsored a state rescue of metropolitan New York mass transit. For five years in a row he promoted a universal state health-insurance program. He consistently supported the right of women to choose whether or not to have a legal abortion. He set up a State Urban Development Corporation to help build housing for the poor, and he helped to enlarge educational opportunities by transforming the state teachers' colleges into the largest system of public education in the world.

Yet at the same time, once many of his fellow liberals became seduced by the New Left, Rockefeller did not hesitate to part company with them. One example of this was the way his continued hard-nosed attitude toward Soviet expansionism survived the protracted agony of Vietnam. Another was his handling of the Attica riots. In September 1971, when a group of inmates in New York State's maximum-security prison seized thirty-nine guards as hostages and demanded Rockefeller's presence at the prison and free passage to a "non-imperialist" country, the Governor did not hesitate to flout the canons of "progressive" penology and order state troopers to retake the prison by force.

Earlier that year, startled by how the state's welfare rolls were ballooning into a nightmare of second- and third-generation dependency, Rockefeller openly defied the "compassionate" liberal community by calling for a residency and work requirement for welfare recipients.



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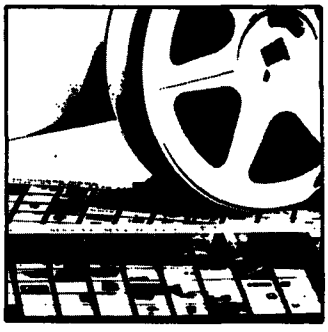

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And at the beginning of 1973, alarmed by the upsurge in hard-drug addiction, Rockefeller braved the opposition of both liberal editorial writers and most of his own staff (including Persico) by conceiving and then shepherding through the legislature a law providing mandatory life prison sentences for pushers of hard drugs.

ALTHOUGH Persico's overemphasis on Rockefeller's wealth tends to obscure this, it is clear that in many ways he resembled Hubert Humphrey, who in fact did offer him the vice-presidential spot on the Democratic ticket in 1968. Admittedly, as Persico's anecdotes attest, Rockefeller certainly lacked Humphrey's sunny disposition. Yet he shared with him the same resilience and enthusiasm, the same desire to make as much of the "good life" as possible accessible to all Americans, and the same conviction that the search for peace must never be conducted without frankly acknowledging the Soviet Union's aggressive and expansionist nature. Above all, Rockefeller and Humphrey shared the same intense hunger for the Presidency, an institution they were confident they could fashion into a potent vehicle of national unity and social progress.

None of this should be interpreted as grounds for sentimentalizing either Nelson Rockefeller or his record. Often as crusty as an old-time ward heeler, he thought nothing of gerrymandering the district of a young Congressman who had irked him or of arranging back-door financing for a literary hatchet-job on a political opponent. Moreover, there is an increasing realization that he and other politicians who once dispensed social-welfare benefits so generously often failed to pay sufficient attention to the long-term effects this was having on economic productivity.

Still, operating within the more buoyant, less straitened circumstances of his day, Nelson Rockefeller, who could easily have whiled away his life in luxury, instead set a standard of constructive reformism and public service which can serve as a model to a new generation. It was no small accomplishment.

Will's Testament

THE PURSUIT OF VIRTUE AND OTHER TORY NOTIONS. By GEORGE F. WILL. *Simon & Schuster. 397 pp. $16.50.*

Reviewed by TERRY EASTLAND

THIS is the second collection of his columns George Will has published; the first, brought out in 1978, bore the title, *The Pursuit of Happiness and Other Sobering Thoughts.* Included here are roughly a quarter of the 500 newspaper and *Newsweek* pieces Will has written in the past four years. Rereading them, one is reminded of the many qualities in Will's writing that make it interesting and enjoyable, whatever one may think of his conservative politics, and which for that reason have helped make him one of the most widely read and quoted columnists today.

Will can be very funny, and can also poke fun at himself. His much-praised wit is only the most noticeable feature of his precise and elegant style. His sentences respect important logical distinctions (such as that between "that" and "which"). He is fond of semicolons and parentheses; metaphor (John Wayne's walk is "the heavy heaving of a barge on a rolling ocean swell") and simile (presidential campaigns "involve candidates bouncing around the continent like popcorn in a skillet"). The rhetorical devices of repetition, antithesis, and juxtaposition make frequent appearances in his columns. As for epigrams, when Will is not quoting someone else's (his mind must be a bin of quotations), he is composing one of his own.

Of all the syndicated columnists, perhaps only William F. Buckley has a stylistic signature so immediately recognizable. And no columnist writes on such a variety of subjects—including the oft-neglected topic of American mores. Will devotes whole columns to life in cities other than Washington and New York (Cleveland, Denver, Los Angeles); to life in a particular state ("Nebraska: The Fairest of Girls,

TERRY EASTLAND *is editor of the* Virginian Pilot *in Norfolk.*

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The Squarest Boys"); to life on the baseball diamond, such as it is ("The Chicago Cubs and the Decline of the West"). Other pieces in this volume concern camping in the mountains, raising children, and turning forty—subjects off the beaten path of news and issues.

BUT this collection is notable for more than Will's abilities as a writer. Taken whole, it offers an opportunity to reflect on the idea summed up by the archaic phrase in the book's title—the pursuit of virtue. In his introduction to this book Will writes that "a society that dedicates itself to the pursuit of happiness had better dedicate itself, including its government, to the pursuit of the virtues indispensable to ordered liberty." What these virtues are, and how America is lacking in them, are the constant themes of almost all of Will's columns.

Thus, for Will, the self-described conservative, free enterprise must not be all *that* free. Capitalism, whose energies he praises, should be constrained by government regulation, and also by people of character. The marks of character are honesty, respect for others, and a recognition that the public good is not produced by "the unfettered pursuit of private goals."

For Will, capitalism does not teach these virtues; in fact it tends to undermine them by encouraging notions of "expansiveness" and "possibility." It is, rather, the proper goal of education to inculcate these virtues; Will cites Aristotle to the effect that "the aim of education is to get the student to like and dislike what he ought." But much contemporary education, in Will's view, fails to do this. Furthermore, much education suggests that all ways of living are morally equal. For Will, a society unwilling to believe that some ways of life are more important than others may not be able to sustain itself.

For example, a society, if it is to endure, must believe in raising children—"the world's most important business"—and in transmitting to the next generation "the essential tools and graces of life." These are indispensable virtues for Will, and stand in contrast to modern ideas of homosexual marriage and other "sexual lifestyles." Transmitting civilization requires people who know their own minds; for this reason Will admires (and writes columns about) the Mormons, John Bunyan, Pope John Paul II, Solzhenitsyn, and Sir Thomas More.

A society that wishes to endure must also believe in its own worth, and be ready if necessary to take steps to preserve itself. It must exhibit a capacity for "strenuous, protracted action in foreign policy." It will not be eager, as Will judges America to be, to delude itself about the world. Especially will it not delude itself with the idea that Soviet leaders share our intentions and essential views.

Because a democratic society presupposes virtuous citizens, virtue, in

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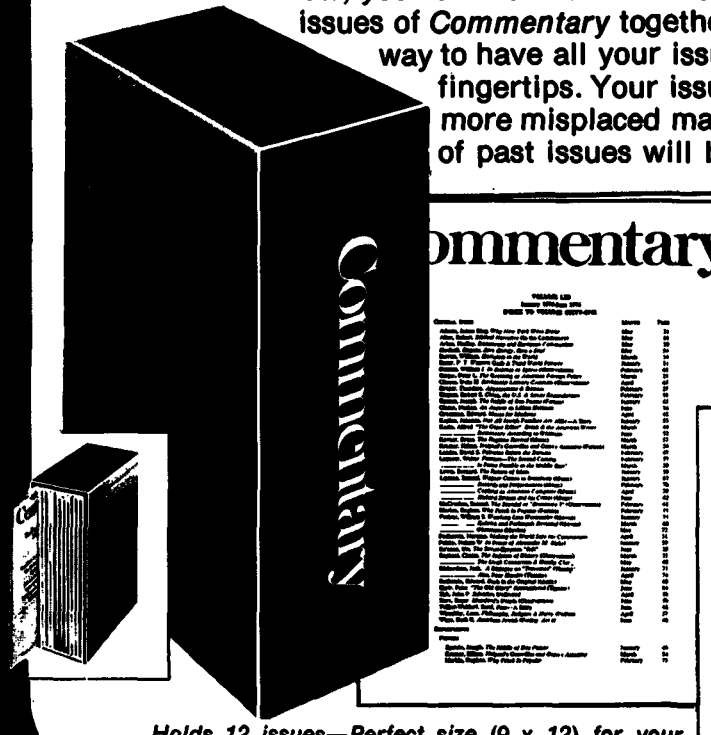

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Will's view, should be nurtured. He applauds people with moral and social imagination who can perform deeds of grace and goodness for others—people like the Little Brothers of the Poor (a Catholic lay group) in Chicago. But private platoons like the Little Brothers cannot do the whole job; government, too, must nourish virtue, not just "soybeans." Will supports a strong government, able to shape society toward certain ends. In his judgment government today does shape society, but usually only by bending to society's pursuits of pleasure and notions of legal entitlement. For Will, the banner of "freedom of choice" has come to justify such essentially destructive phenomena as legalized gambling and widespread pornography, both subversive of community standards of virtue.

In public life, Will insists on the need for virtues like "the ability to lead, and the ability to formulate and administer policies that address the great issues of the day." Such virtues are not as valued by the body politic as "private virtues" like sincerity and earnestness—Jimmy Carter's specialties. But for Will the political vocation is an admirable one, itself a school of virtue and a virtuous pursuit, if one too often corrupted today by politicians who pander to their constituents and conduct politics according to the polls.

THIS, then, is the essential Will as disclosed by his new collection of columns. As with all columnists, one will find areas of disagreement. For example, I am not sure legalized gambling is a sign of the decline of the West, and I believe that Will underrates capitalism. It will not save any souls, but it can help foster minimal civic virtues like honesty, diligence, and keeping one's word. Of greater danger today is education: in my experience, far more people have been ruined by college than by commerce. Moreover, although Will sometimes seems to suggest otherwise, virtue has not really lost all its appeal for Americans. A society that can bestow an Academy Award on *Chariots of Fire*, a movie about moral and spiritual aspiration (which Will praised in a December 1981 column), must still retain a degree of health.

But if Will sometimes overdraws his criticisms, he is right, on balance, to be preoccupied with virtue. The nation was conceived in liberty, but the Founding Fathers also preached the importance of virtue. Indeed, the story of America can fairly be written in terms of the rise of liberty and the fall of virtue, a rise and fall that have been most evident in this century. Today, for the first time in American political history, the leadership of a major political party (the Democratic party) seems to show little interest in the questions of virtue that rightly concern Will, while many Americans—perhaps a majority—are meanwhile inclined to laugh at the very mention of the word. On a Washington television station in late March, Will was interviewed by a talk-show host who, having got to the word "virtue" in the book's title, broke out in laughter, as though Will were from outer space (not Illinois, where, as Will writes in one of the columns, "virtue is valued and I am from").

The central issue facing the nation is one Will himself suggests in a column in this collection: whether, "a century from now, philosophers and historians will study the trajectory of the United States in the second half of this century as the most striking instance of national decline since that of Spain, centuries ago." If that decline is finally arrested, it will be through an infusion of the virtue, and the virtues, so ably celebrated by George Will.

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